$2.00 February 12, 1993

COMMONWEAL

YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD THEORY DOWN The battle over the Just War
STEPHEN J. POPE

I THINK YOU SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE... ME, I'M NOT SO SURE
Gordon D. Marino

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The irrepressible LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM'S Religious booknotes

A SEDAN IS NOT A HOME
David L. Kirp

FROM GHETTO TO HILLTOP
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CORRESPONDENCE

What about prevention?

South Dartmouth, Mass.

To the Editors: In all the discussion about sexual abuse by priests, I have seen no statement from church authorities on what is being done or should be done to *prevent* such abuse before it happens. It should, at long last, be clear even to the hierarchy that human sexuality cannot simply be locked in storage somewhere when the celibate life is chosen, and that there is urgent need throughout the training and subsequent lives of clerics and religious—seminarians, priests, nuns—to provide counseling on how they can cope with their sexual selves.

Are there, in fact, preventive measures in place—required programs, dialogues, role-playing sessions, candid confrontations about one's sexuality? Nobody knows; in none of the lamentations over sexual abuse have we seen a single statement about measures taken by the church to heighten the awareness of priests and religious (and of those close to them) about the forces within and around them that can lead to behavior destructive of themselves and of potential young victims.

Dealing wisely and honestly with priest-abusers after the damage has been done is surely necessary, but it is only a beginning.

RUSSELL A. WARREN

Corrections

Pretty bad: An interesting letter ["Dancing at Ty Mam Duw," Correspondence, January 15] appeared with the writer's name misspelled. The correct spelling: Leon Lukaszewski. We regret the error.

Very bad: Not only did we misspell Judith Hershcopf Banki's name on the January 15 cover, but we also misidentified her former position. Before her recent retirement, Ms. Banki was for many years the *Associate* Interreligious Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee. Our apologies more than twice over.

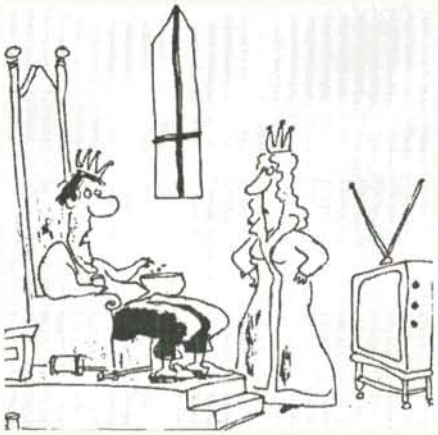
THE EDITORS

Guarding the fort

Fresno, Calif.

To the Editors: David Carlin, Jr., suggests ["Institutional Identities," January 15] that years of commitment and service give generals and bishops special knowledge that justifies keeping homosexuals out of the military and women out of the priesthood.

History doesn't support that thesis. Institutionalists in the army court-martialed Colonel Billy Mitchell for advocating air power, and the current pope won't allow any discussion of ordaining women.



"Oh yeah? Well, show me where it's written that the king has to be an exemplary leader of the people!"

Silencing Mitchell didn't prevent the Nazis from producing Stukas, and the "Syllabus of Errors" didn't prevent the bishops at Vatican II from passing the "Declaration on Religious Freedom."

I suggest a different theory to explain the behavior of institutionalists: their years of loyalty and service lead them to care more about preserving their institutions than about doing what their institutions stand for. This is plausible if you consider how institutions get established.

Charismatic leaders rise up from the multitude and lead people from bondage, starvation, or bankruptcy. After the founder dies, followers create an institution to develop a creed and pass it forward. After a few decades, institutionalists start working harder to maintain the institution than to do what their founder told them to do. The process is as close to "natural" as any natural law I've been told of. It leads to denial of the only absolute truth humankind can observe: change. (As Margaret O'Brien Steinfels has written, acknowledging change does not entail denying the validity of principle.)

These opinions come from my experiences in trench and pew. From the Marine Corps trenches I have occupied (actually foxholes, slit trenches, and bunkers, and only twice while shells were flying), I can't see any reason for denying homosexuals the right to get killed alongside me. Unlike the institutional generals encamped at the rear, shellfire does not discriminate between homosexuals and heterosexuals.

Similarly, from the pews I've occupied, I find it doesn't make much difference if a male or a female calls me to do what Jesus told me to do. The quality of the call is what counts. When Jesus said, "Come follow me," he didn't say, "Men only." The only reason women didn't share in the first Eucharist was that conventions of the time kept men and women from getting together for that kind of supper.

(Continued on page 26)

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COMMONWEAL

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The curse abides

On May 3, 1983, the Catholic bishops of the United States issued their pastoral letter on peace and war, decrying the arms race as a curse on humanity and warning that "the threat of nuclear war hangs over the human community." A decade later, with the signing of the START II accord in Moscow on January 3, 1993, remarkable reductions—up to two-thirds of Russian and U.S. strategic weapons—are scheduled by 2003. Yet despite START II, the nuclear arms race continues: worldwide, 20,000 nuclear warheads will still remain in place in 2003. And this year alone, the U.S. plans to spend $38 billion on nuclear war preparations.

Recent tensions among Russia, the U.S., and Ukraine over the latter's failure to implement START I, signed in 1991, make clear how hard it is for nuclear-armed states to wean themselves from dependency on these devastating weapons. Because knowledge of nuclear technology is widespread and indestructible, the nuclear genie is out of the bottle. Crude fission weapons can be constructed by nearly any nation able to reprocess nuclear fuel into plutonium from its civilian power stations. Nuclear power programs in both Algeria and North Korea may conceal nuclear weapons production, and Iraq's "great deceit" in hiding its program should dispel any false optimism about taming the nuclear hydra. The U.S., while attempting to curtail such nuclear proliferation, has refused to definitively stop its own nuclear testing. Defense Department scientists are even now developing a new generation of small nuclear weapons—including a thousand-ton "tinynuke" warhead for attacking ground troops—for use in the third world.

Now add to this these ominous, everyday facts: other weapons of mass destruction—chemical and biological weapons—are far easier to make and to conceal than nuclear weapons; and conventional arms transfers worldwide go on unabated, outstripping in dollar value even the world's grain trade. From 1987 to 1991, the top five exporters of conventional weapons (as it happens, the five permanent members of the Security Council, which are also acknowledged nuclear powers) sold more than $150 billion in conventional arms, with the U.S. and the Soviet Union accounting for $120 billion between them.

But arms proliferation in all these categories is not spawned by sheer availability. As the bishops noted, "negotiating on arms control agreements in isolation, without persistent and parallel efforts to reduce the political tensions which motivate the buildup of armaments, will not suffice." Arms reduction is chiefly a political and diplomatic challenge, more a matter of restraining the demand-side of the arms equation than of controlling the supply-side. To build the modicum of trust between adversaries needed to instill even the glimmer of hope for nonmilitary solutions, the bishops called for a variety of initiatives, including unilateral ones. The near-collapse of the Soviet economy and the ascendancy of Mikhail Gorbachev allowed such

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unilateral actions to become a reality, and George Bush reciprocated in kind. The fact that the dramatic reductions proposed in START II were formulated in less than six months would have been thought impossible even two years ago.

In 1990, the U.S. and the former Soviet Union agreed bilaterally to halt the production of chemical warfare agents and to reduce their stocks of these weapons. While only the U.S., Russia, and Iraq admit to having chemical weapons, twenty other nations are suspected of having them. But the U.S.-Soviet initiative gave rise to a new, multilateral chemical weapons accord. Last month in Paris, more than 120 nations, including the U.S., Russia, Israel, and Iran, began signing the new Chemical Weapons Convention, the most stringent agreement of its kind. It not only outlaws the development, production, and use of chemical weapons, but calls for the destruction of existing stocks; the dismantling of all production facilities within ten years; and it establishes the most complex international verification regime ever designed, one that includes challenge inspections of a suspected country. In this respect, the CWC itself builds on the 1987 U.S.-USSR intermediate-range nuclear treaty that set stringent standards for verification.

But nations do not necessarily abide by their treaty obligations. Iraq flaunts the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to which it is a party, and has made a sieve of international nuclear regulations. It has been able to do this because governments which ought to know better lack vigilance and the international agencies meant to monitor such matters do not have the means or the backing they need. According to the *New York Times* (November 25, 1992), half of the equipment licensed by the U.S. Commerce Department for sale to Iran in the past four years was considered "nuclear weapons relevant" by the Energy Department. Stronger regulation and better coordination need immediate attention.

Conventional weapons do not evoke the same fear as weapons of mass destruction, yet according to Richard Barnet (*Harpers*, February 1993), at least 20 million people died during the cold-war period in more than 120 conventional wars. It is conventional weapons that most need tough, multilateral controls. But it is here that the "conversion of hearts" the bishops called for will be most difficult to achieve: A well-established pattern for worldwide arms trading exists; extensive and efficient suppliers maintain it; tensions that all but defy solutions drive demand; and the sheer force of habit creates a vicious circle. Hardly was the Gulf War ended, for example, when President Bush reversed his own call for proscribing arms transfers to the Middle East and announced the U.S. would sell 18 billion dollars' worth of arms to its allies in the region

During the cold war, it was control of conventional weapons that received the least scrutiny of all arms transfers. Now, some hint of change is finally afoot. In 1990, The Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty brought significant cutbacks in these arms in Europe and created greater "transparency" of arms transfers. This move, coupled with the Gulf War, led to a December 1991 UN General Assembly call for a voluntary register of all international arms sales. More than 150 nations, not including China, approved the resolution. As a result, by this April, all major 1992 arms transfers are to have been reported to the UN. It is a modest, necessary step.

The bishops were correct a decade ago when they observed that the demand for weapons will disappear only when the earth's various tribes and factions have developed more effective means of nonviolent conflict resolution. But the mark of Cain abides: In the last ten years, more than 70 percent of those who died in wars were unarmed civilians, victims of conventional weapons. The next ten years will be both critical and dangerous. It is crucial that world leaders attend to the control of conventional arms, including the bishops who should speak out again with the same principled specificity that marked "The Challenge of Peace."

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Much to our joy and relief, Richard Haas, a Fordham graduate, has joined *Commonweal* as business manager. Richard comes to us on a tidal wave of glowing recommendations and testimonials. He also wears a very nifty fedora. He worked as a newspaper reporter, marketing director, and circulation manager before venturing out on his own as a consultant specializing in marketing and management assistance for religious publications. It's amazing the number of things Richard has done, and done well—almost as amazing as the number of things he will have to do to keep *Commonweal* afloat.

Did we say afloat? The great December storm here in the New York area flooded Richard and his family out of their rented home on the New Jersey shore. The Haases lost both their cars, but no one was hurt and their modest sailboat survived undamaged. Clearly, this is a man who knows how to keep his—and our—head above water. Anchors away!

REPORT FROM THE STREETS

A SEDAN IS NOT A HOME

CAN YOU SPARE SOME LOVE?

A while back, my car was stolen from in front of my house in San Francisco. The police called a few days later to inform me that it had been found, undamaged. It wasn't until I paid the towing fees and got the car home that I noticed the back seat was piled with dirty laundry and a worn blanket, a package of chocolate chip cookies, a box of cereal, a metal container of aspirin.

Then the police called again. They had caught the thief and wanted to know if I was going to press charges. The law-abiding voice inside me would normally have replied "of course," but all that stuff, and the implication that someone had been

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living in my car, held me back. I asked the police to tell me about the thief and they did so, a bit sheepishly. When my car had been spotted, in the Tenderloin District of the city, someone had in fact been living there: a sixteen-year-old, visibly pregnant girl. Because she was in pain, not moving much, the police took her to the hospital. She wasn't doing too well, during her ninth month of pregnancy, and the doctors were unsure how the newborn would make out.

No, I did not want to press charges, I said. Pressing charges was the furthest thing from my mind. I thought a lot about the girl-woman, still nameless to me, with no better place to go than the back seat of my car. I imagined myself taking some kind of responsibility for her but the police weren't volunteering a name. Besides, that felt like someone else's gesture, the plot-line from *Grand Canyon*. I vowed instead to write larger checks to charities that help the needy and to spend the occasional morning serving breakfast at the shelter down the road. I wondered when the memory would fade, and wondered too at my own moral incoherence.

Shortly after this episode, I spent several weeks in the colonial cities of Mexico. The street poverty I encountered there had its own distinctive rhythms. Over what must have been a very long time, so familiar to everyone were the patterns of behavior, begging had become institutionalized. While a few of those asking for money were young mothers carrying infants, mostly they were men and women whose ages I couldn't begin to guess. Their limbs were twisted like the branches of trees, their fingers curled arthritically into hooks, their backs were bent as if bearing an impossible weight. Their faces were weathered like cracked leather and some bore the bitten-off look of lepers.

An American doctor would have to refer to old medical books or texts concerning the third world in order to diagnose the maladies of these people. Even in the poorest hollows of the rich nation we live in there is nothing remotely comparable, nothing to prepare the visitor who imagines himself accustomed to the phenomenon we call homelessness.

Since the Mexican polity, itself economically hard-pressed, mostly ignores these people, they face a Hobson's choice: either live off the small kindnesses of strangers or accept the prospect of starvation. And so they come, one by one, to the *zocalos*, the plazas where the inhabitants pass their idle hours drinking *licuadas*, reading the daily paper, getting their shoes shined. Or else the beggars crouch in the shadows cast by the baroque cathedrals frequented by the pious and the curious. Wordlessly, they extend a hand to passers-by. A hundred peso coin brings a smile. A thousand-peso coin, about thirty-three U.S. cents, is just about enough to live on for a day. The coins sagged in my pockets when I walked around the Mexican streets.

These poor people seem not to inhabit the same moral universe as the adolescent refugees from the suburbs who cruise my San Francisco neighborhood. The latter are mostly spaced-out, looking to score their next high, and their panhandling technique can be aggressive. As I walk down Haight Street, bearing its corroded memories of the Love Generation, one of them sticks out a foot to stop me. "Come on, richie," he says, not a nickname but a statement about my supposed wealth, "gimme a buck."

I am absolutely unmoved by the demand. Indeed, I sense the stirrings of a contrary instinct to seize him by the tuft of his Mowhawk, toss him in a shower, and call some adult-in-charge, the truant officer or a welfare caseworker, who can haul him away. The fantasy catches me short, makes me think about whether I am turning into my habitually indignant parents, whether this is what compassion fatigue means.

In a country English church I once visited—all shiny brass fittings, sprays of gladiolas at the altar that have been left by the church ladies, gravestones suitable for rubbing—there is a small plaque dating from the eighteenth century. The inscription promises a loaf of bread each week to the poorest family in the parish. I try hard to imagine just how this determination used to be made. What weekly self-abasements did those poor families endure to ward off starvation? How did the almost-but-not-quite-poorest family make do? In this act of imagining, I learned something about why we think of welfare as a public good—about why we acknowledge a social responsibility to the poor, not just a grudging personal duty. Going to Mexico made me feel like a time-traveler, as if the beggars I encountered, transposed to eighteenth-century England, would have received their weekly loaves of bread from the good parishioners.

Those of us whose chief complaint about how the United States treats the poor is not that we are being taxed too heavily but rather that we give too little, take comfort from programs like AFDC, food stamps, and Medicaid. Although the U.S. is, far and away, the most miserly among industrialized nations, at least we do not ask poor people to surrender every bit of their self-respect to stay alive. But my shadow encounter with that sixteen-year-old pregnant girl makes me wonder about the nature of that achievement. The tacit bargain this country has made with its poor, the American ritual-in-the-making for encounters with the homeless, goes something like this: We will spend modest sums of money and they will stay out of sight. Even in famously liberal San Francisco, busloads of the homeless were moved out like so many sheep during a recent travel agents' convention. The mayor, ex-police chief Frank Jordan, is now

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promoting a ballot measure that would punish "aggressive panhandling."

This social bargain surely helped the sixteen-year-old—it got her free hospital care—and it will help others who are in desperate straits. But many of those on the streets really need more than dollars impersonally transferred by an indifferent state. This mother-to-be needs concrete gestures of caring, emotional hand-holding, and practical skills for survival in what will surely be tough times. Maybe that's what the Haight Street adolescent angrily demanding a dollar needs too—something that might be called the public equivalent of love.

I know what is wrong with this idea. It is turn-of-the-century progressivism, warmed-over. It's what the orphanages, asylums, reformatories, and homes for wayward girls were supposed to, and mostly failed to, deliver. A generation ago, we regarded deinstitutionalization—shuttering these places, sending people back to their communities—as a good deed of a humane society. Now we realize things are much more complicated, that the communities in question have mostly zoned and gated and frozen out the unwanted, dumping undesired infants in hospital wards and undesired adults on the streets. Yet that realization only reframes the issue. Are there Jane Addamses for our time, secular saints for whom the very idea of a public equivalent of love is not an embarrassment and an irrelevance?

DAVID L. KIRP

David L. Kirp is professor of public policy at the University of California, Berkeley, and author, most recently, of Learning by Heart: AIDS and Schoolchildren in America's Communities, *and* AIDS in the Industrialized Democracies *(both Rutgers University Press).*

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

FROM GHETTO TO HILLTOP

OUR COLLEGES, OUR SELVES

Like the history of (non-Hispanic) Catholicism generally in the United States, the history of American Catholic higher education can be divided, very roughly, into two periods: (1) the era of the Catholic "ghetto," which ran from the nineteenth century till the 1960s; (2) the era of integration, which has run from the mid-1960s to the present.

1. In the era of the "ghetto," Catholics were predominantly immigrants and the children or grandchildren of immigrants. Compared with other Americans of European ancestry, mainly Protestants, Catholics were socially inferior. They had less income and education, held lower-status jobs, lived in poorer neighborhoods, had higher crime rates, etc.

In this long and difficult period, American Catholicism had three great social goals: (a) to retain a Catholic identity in a society overwhelmingly non-Catholic; (b) to maintain a sense of collective pride despite inferior social status; and (c) to catch up to or even surpass old-line Americans at their own game.

Catholic colleges played a critical role in this process. On the one hand, they performed an "operation bootstrap." That is, they elevated children of blue-collar, immigrant stock to higher-status occupations: medicine, law, education, business, government, etc. On the other hand, they sheltered these upwardly mobile young Catholics from a world of non-Catholic high culture. They preserved tender minds from exposure to such heathens as John Dewey and Sigmund Freud, and they didn't burden them with the confusing results of modern biblical scholarship.

In spite of having an official philosophy (Aristotelianism) and an official theology (Thomism), both of which scorned pragmatism and exalted the ideal of pure, disinterested truth (or rather Truth, which always had a capital T in those days), these colleges were extraordinarily pragmatic institutions. They had a social function to perform, and they performed it to perfection. But they were not places where the life of the mind always flourished. In general, their faculties had few members with Ph.D.s, they were overloaded with priests and nuns of narrow education, and they were largely out of touch with American intellectual life. They were magnificent at producing doctors and lawyers and accountants; but they produced relatively few scholars and scientists, and almost none of the first rank.

By the 1950s John Tracy Ellis and others were asking, "Where are the Catholic intellectuals?" The fact that the question was finally being asked was an indication that the change was just around the corner; for until then intellectualism had been such a stranger to American Catholic life that hardly anyone noticed it was absent.

2. The moment finally arrived when (non-Hispanic) Catholics caught up with the rest of America, a moment symbolized by the election and presidency of John Kennedy (1960-63). This moment became all the more dramatic a dividing line because it roughly coincided with Vatican II and was quickly followed by the great cultural revolution of the late-1960s. Catholic colleges had worked so well that they now found themselves deprived of their traditional social function. Some of them simply went out of business. Others decided to plunge at long last into the mainstream of American academic life. Beginning in the mid-1960s, they loaded their faculties with Ph.D.s; priests and nuns, who had hitherto constituted the great majority of teachers, were reduced to a small minority (a process facilitated by a sharp decline in numbers of priests and nuns); and teachers were increasingly hired on the basis of academic merit, regardless of religious affiliation.

As a result, faculties at Catholic colleges today are academically far superior to those in the far-off days of the ghetto; but at the same time, and virtually in the same

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proportion, the Catholic identity of those colleges has grown increasingly tenuous. A priest or sister in the president's office, a handful of clerics on the faculty, and a few chaplains living in the dorms: today in many colleges this is the Catholic filigree on an otherwise secular structure. Catholic colleges seem to be traveling the same road many Protestant colleges journeyed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—a road leading to complete secularization, to complete loss of religious identity.

Now if you have a theory of society which says that the more secularized things get the better, then you will applaud the de-Catholicizing of Catholic colleges. But that's not my theory. As I see it, a healthy modern society needs a balance between secular and religious elements, and it especially needs this in the intellectual life. Yet this balance has been lost in contemporary America. Thus I deplore the de-Catholicizing of Catholic colleges, and I applaud those colleges that are fighting valiantly to hold onto their Catholic identity.

Of course there is no going back to the days of the ghetto. That heroic age—and it truly was heroic—is gone forever. The great challenge for the contemporary Catholic institution of higher education is to blend, in a kind of Hegelian synthesis, the distinctive features of the first two eras of its existence: the religious identity of the pre-assimilation era and the academic quality of the recent era of full assimilation.

But the Catholic college and university is inseparable from the Catholic population generally. It was relatively easy to construct ghetto-like colleges in the age of the Catholic ghetto. And it was relatively easy to create mainstream American colleges in the era when Catholics fully entered the American mainstream. Post-assimilation Catholic colleges and universities will be maintained only if there is a postassimilation Catholic population to support them. "Will Catholic colleges remain Catholic?" is the lesser question; the greater question is: "Will American Catholics remain distinctively Catholic, or will they be swallowed up by the largely secularized culture that surrounds them?" □

OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

IT DOESN'T HURT TO HOPE

CLINTON IS GOOD AT COMEBACKS

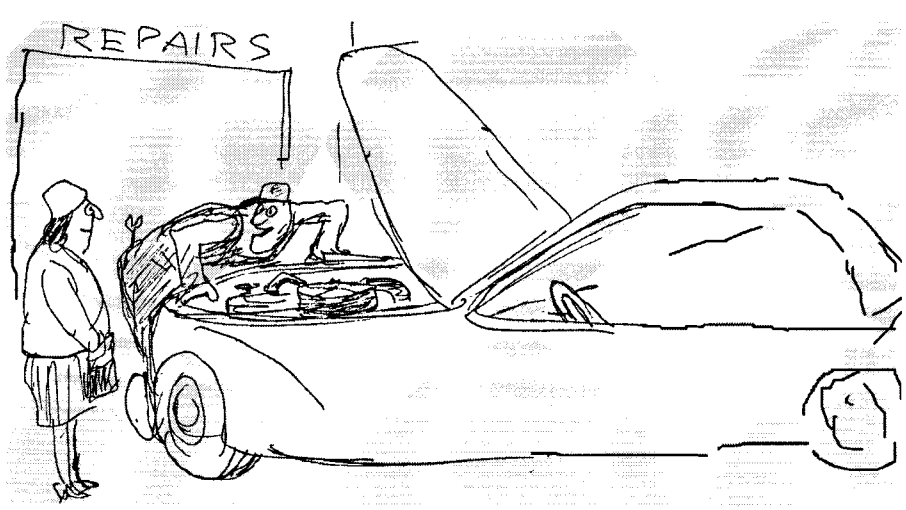
The nation still basks in the glow of a perfect Inauguration Day, made almost magical by blue sky and bright January sun. As the old saying goes, it did not rain on President Clinton's parade. But the very next day, the skys darkened, cold rain poured, and the weather was reflected in the storm surrounding his unfortunate choice for attorney general. Even before the symbolic trip from Monticello to Washington, before the ringing of the bells and the fireworks, before the reunion on the Mall, the gala and the concerts, before the inaugural ceremony and the balls—before all that, William Jefferson Clinton was confronted with challenge and horror abroad and with hard realities at home compelling him to recant on glowing campaign promises.

I cannot remember an incoming president so criticized and analyzed before taking the oath of office. And in the press, the raising of doubts continues. Is he hypocritical, as those claim who point to the stringent code of ethics he insisted his appointees must agree to and some of the people actually appointed? (Ron Brown, confirmed for secretary of commerce, seems unable to separate himself from his former corporate clients, only reluctantly responding to pressure to give up representing some of them while in office. And Zoë Baird knowingly broke the law she was to administer—a fact known to Clinton at the time her name was sent up.)

Is he heartless and dissembling, as those say who point to his decision to continue the Bush practice of having the Coast Guard return fleeing Haitian boat people to the country they seek to escape? Is the same decision evidence of perhaps less-than-conscious racism?

Is he a creature of the media giving only lip service to the normal processes of government as those believe who point to his close relationship to Hollywood and television figures? (His inaugural was planned and orchestrated by close friend and producer Harry Thomason and sold to four networks for semi-exclusive use. The press aide for the inaugural bus trip was not, as on other trips, a young staffer but Peter Gruber, chairman of Sony Pictures, Inc.)

Is he psychologically unfit to take over the nation's problems and deal with them? Critic Jonathan Yardley refers to his "perhaps pathological" tardiness which staffers



"Where there's life there's hope. Right, Mrs. Ingram?"

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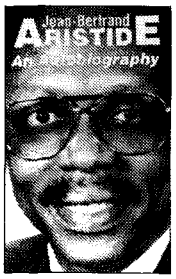
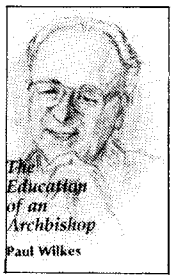
Contemporary Incarnations of the Gospel





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only half-jokingly call operating on CST, "Clinton Standard Time." (He kept the Bushes waiting twenty-five minutes before joining them for the inaugural ceremony.) Does it show an innate disregard for those he is scheduled to meet or join?

Is he a micromanager apt to bog down in detail? Even after inauguration day, the transition teams who were supposed to make it possible "to hit the ground running" were nowhere near filling the crucial subcabinet posts in which policy is determined. Old Washington hands agree that if you want to influence legislation you want to get in at the subcabinet level where the process begins. The winnowing of names for these appointments was made by the centralized personnel office in Washington—then lists of five to ten names were sent to Little Rock. There the president-elect became personally involved, thus slowing down the final decisions because he also had to attend to foreign policy issues and events like his meeting with the Mexican president. Is he, observers ask, too "hands-on," too unwilling to delegate? As I write, "holdovers" from the Bush administration are keeping agencies going.

Is he also content with understanding the multi-facets of a national problem rather than dealing decisively to solve it? Financial writers cite his impressive performance at the economic "summit." Clinton was the master of statistic and theory, they say, but where are the decisions on budget, on "pump-priming," on welfare, on health care? His cabinet appointees, quizzed by the Senate, did not seem to know.

While the speculations about the president's ability to govern continue, pessimistic predictions about the environment in which he must try to govern abound. He, who had hoped to concentrate first on the domestic side of his responsibilities, finds problems abroad taking precedence. According to his predecessor from his own party, former President Jimmy Carter, Clinton is "inheriting the biggest bag of headaches of any president since Truman" (*New York Times*, January 14, 1993). Carter thinks President George Bush left so many international commitments to Clinton that he could find himself entrapped in quicksand.

Columnist Robert J. Samuelson spells out the complexity of the world Clinton faces: "Governments aren't collapsing but they are having more trouble governing. The continuing disorder of the post-cold war world is a reflection of this....Too much domestic strife feeds global strife, old borders disintegrate. As governments weaken, they try to shore up support by blaming problems on outsiders. It's harder to cooperate on common interests.... What used to be called the 'Western Alliance' of the United States, Europe, and Japan is rapidly fraying" (*Washington Post*, January 7, 1993).

Descriptions of the domestic environment are equally dismaying. Professor Paul Light of the Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota, in commenting on Clinton's transition, said that we've reached a stage in the layering of government bureaucracy that no transition can succeed. Clinton, he estimated, had to fill vacancies in fifteen layers of government, nine more then there were in Kennedy's day.

Most pessimistic of all, senior statesman George Kennan, author of the cold-war containment policy, has just published a book, *Around the Cragged Hill* (W.W. Norton), in which he says that no president elected in our current election process can make long-range change, that the country has grown too populous to be governable, that the diversity fueled by recent immigration and recurrent racism defies any real unity.

Despite all this, polls and interviews show that the people are hopeful. I, among them, am hopeful. We have, I believe, a complex man for our complex problems. He has made, and will make, mistakes. But one cannot listen to President Clinton, or watch him with people, without being buoyed by his faith and sincerity of purpose. Every one of the negatives about him listed above implies a positive. Is it hypocritical to adjust to reality? Cannot the man who three times during his campaign came from behind with the help of television be the master of the medium as well as its creature? Is he not the same man who has laid the foundation for institutional change by his outreach to Congress? And so on. To paraphrase the song, let us give hope a chance. □

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YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD THEORY DOWN

THE JUST WAR, THE GULF WAR & BEYOND

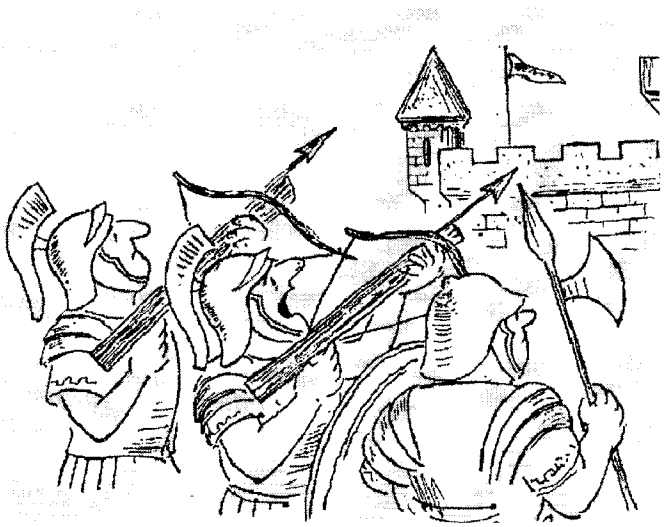
STEVEN J. POPE

Two years ago, during the Gulf War of 1991, the just-war theory—for 1,500 years the mainstay of Catholic analysis for determining the morality of entering and conducting a war—was perhaps more widely discussed and debated than during any recent conflict, including hostilities in Bosnia, Somalia, and, last month, in Iraq itself. At the time, moralists, commentators, politicians, and even military leaders appealed to just-war principles as not only useful but even authoritative. Following the end of actual combat in the Gulf in late February 1991, however, the just-war theory itself came under attack from an unlikely source, the Rome-based Jesuit journal, *La Civiltá Cattolica*. (*Civiltá*'s editorials are regularly reviewed by the Vatican Secretariat of State and they have been known to reflect Vatican approaches to various issues.) In a July 6, 1991, editorial, "Modern War and Christian Conscience" (reprinted, *Origins*, December 19, 1991), *Civiltá* not only censured the war in the Persian Gulf but rendered an absolute condemnation of modern war in general. And going even further, it explicitly denounced the traditional just-war theory.

The editorial was warmly welcomed in many circles as an important contribution to the ongoing debate over the morality of war. Michael Kennedy, staff writer for the *Boston Globe*, wrote that it provided the "clinching argument" regarding the immorality of the Gulf War (March 17, 1992). Msgr. William H. Shannon, who provided the *Origins* translation of the Italian text, praised the editorial for breaking new ground in Catholic teaching on war and moving the church in "new directions of reflection and action" (*America*, February 15, 1992). He claimed that the editorial reflects a growing conviction in the church regarding the incompatibility of violence and Christian love.

Rather than "taking sides" in the ongoing moral debate about our involvement in the Gulf War, however, I would like to examine the quality of moral reasoning advanced by the *Civiltá* editorial. The editorial's major argument is that the Gulf War, like all modern war, failed to meet the just-war criterion of "proportionality"; a subsidiary argument is that it also failed to meet the theory's criterion of "last resort." The heart of *Civiltá*'s argument is that the awesome destructive power of modern military technology always leads its users to wage an "unlimited" or "total" war and is therefore by its very nature "disproportionate."

The editorial argued that the UN coalition might have had "just cause" in initially responding to the occupation of Kuwait, but that the evils brought about in the actual waging of the war—the editorial claims 30,000 civilians and perhaps 160,000 soldiers were killed—vastly outweighed the good that was being pursued. As J. Bryan Hehir (*Commonweal*, February 28, 1992), John Langan (*Commonweal*, June 1, 1991), and other scholars have observed, however, the postwar appraisal of proportionality depends on reliable empirical assessments of the long-tern impact of the war on civilian life. Some experts believe that the number of civilian deaths from civil unrest, infrastructure devastation, and the economic embargo will far exceed the total number of deaths incurred during the active phase of the war. Greenpeace, for example, has estimated that over 240,000 Iraqi civilians (out of a total population of 18 million) died as a result of the war and its aftermath, not including those killed in recent air strikes. A November 1991 Middle



"I hope we don't hit any civilians!"

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East Watch report focused on the number of Iraqi civilians killed as a direct result of allied air bombardment or missile attacks, and last summer there was a resurgence of interest in long-term effects of the war, particularly with the emergence of medical problems among some American veterans of the campaign. In the September 24, 1992, *New England Journal of Medicine*, a Harvard study team maintained that approximately 46,900 children had died between January and August 1991 alone, a threefold increase in mortality among children under five years of age in Iraq. But from what I can tell, there have been no more comprehensive studies on the broader toll taken by allied attacks on the Iraqi infrastructure (deaths attributed to disease, malnutrition, and lack of medical care which resulted from disruption of Iraqi power and water purification systems). Judgments of proportionality, of course, consider not only damage to one's own soldiers but the harm inflicted on one's opponents, including civilian populations. Thus the absence of reasonably reliable estimates of war damage continues to cripple our ability to morally assess the proportionality of the prosecution of the war—a situation aggravated by the refusal of the United States government to affirm officially an estimate of casualities.

Civiltá's analysis of proportionality in the Gulf War can be outlined as follows: (1) the "nature" of technology leads modern war to be disproportionate (or "unlimited," or "total"); (2) the Gulf War was a case of modern war; therefore (3) the Gulf War was a disproportionate means to achieving the liberation of Kuwait. This conclusion may be correct but the argument is vulnerable to several criticisms. First, it ignores the obvious fact that these technologies are operated by human beings who have some degree of freedom and a range of choices regarding their use of such weapons. Military escalation may be an increased danger in modern war, but we are capable of more rational control than the editorial admits.

Second, *Civiltá* ignores the fact that modern war has been limited in certain instances. Since 1918, with the possible exception of the Soviets in Afghanistan, none of the "Great Powers" has employed chemical or biological weapons. (Saddam Hussein's use of poison gas against the Kurds stands as the major example of the use of this weapon by a minor power.) Temptations to further escalation of biological and chemical, but also of thermonuclear, weapons have been resisted, with the notable exception of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. War has no doubt become increasingly "brutal" in this century, but it has not been consistently "unlimited" or "total."

The editorial omitted any reference to the increased accuracy of at least some of these weapons. Even though phrases such as "surgical strikes" and "pinpoint accuracy" are exaggerations, it is beyond doubt that laser-guided missiles and Tomahawk cruise missiles, for example, are much more accurate than the gravity bombs dropped from American B-29s and British Lancasters in World War II. Only 7 percent of the weapons employed in the Gulf War were in fact "smart bombs" (and of those about 40 percent missed their targets); nevertheless, a quantum leap in precision has increased the capacity of weapons to strike military targets and to minimize indirect damage to civilians.

Technical capacity, however, must be complemented with a will to use these weapons in a just manner. Some people argue that since wars in this century have never been absolutely "clean," the conditions of the just-war tenets are now unattainable in principle. Failure to apply these tenets, however, might not be the result of their supposed obsolescence but a failure of human will, as when moral principles give way to military expediency, political advantage, or some claim of perceived national self-interest (or some other motive, such as revenge). From a just-war perspective, commitment to abide by these principles in those tragic instances when war is unavoidable is preferable to either absolute pacifism or "war-is-hell" realism.

The editorial, in keeping with public statements by Pope Pius XII and the documents of Vatican II, conceded that a war of strict self-defense is legitimate under certain conditions. Moral approbation of defensive war, however, seems to lead the editorial into a self-contradiction: either all modern wars truly are "absolutely immoral" and the exercise of self-defense is also immoral (and obviously, therefore, prohibited), or self-defense is legitimate and war is not absolutely, i.e., without exception, immoral. In either case, the argument of the editorial seems to collapse under the weight of this internal contradiction.

Once admitted, the right to legitimate self-defense raises the question of defending the security of innocent third parties, an issue brought into heightened focus by events in Bosnia and Somalia. While a concern at the heart of the just-war tradition, it was an issue studiously avoided in the *Civiltá* editorial. Interestingly, in his recent speech before the Vatican diplomatic corps (January 16, 1993), Pope John Paul II specifically endorsed the duty of capable third-party states to disarm an "unjust aggressor"—in this case, apparently, Serbian Bosnians—if all other means have proven ineffective. Presumably, this principle, which the pope described in terms of "humanitarian intervention," could be used with further specification in the case of the UN intervention in Somalia. It seems eminently reasonable that if one is justified in employing violence to defend the safety and welfare of one's own society, one is justified in defending the right of other societies as well (assuming fulfillment of the other provisions, such as just authority, just cause, and right intention). However, the *Civiltá* editorial argued that even though strict self-defense is a legitimate basis for entering into war, the "inexorable logic of war" leads to a "total" response. This implies that it would be better to submit to injustice rather than to prosecute even a defensive war in a disproportionate manner. But this itself is a traditional claim, one that recognizes self-defense as a right whose exercise must be limited by proportionality and discrimination.

"Modern War and Christian Conscience" projected the inevitability of "total war" onto every military engagement as a result of the "inexorable inner logic" of modern warfare. In my judgment, this imposition of an *a priori* moral evaluation amounts to a massive overgeneralization. The editorial moved from a historical tendency (escalation to "total" war) to a universal claim about the "nature" of modern war that claims a consistency that can only be properly attributed to a logical ne-

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cessity (modern war is always "total"). The moralist John Ford, S.J., noted years ago that if all modern wars are necessarily "total"—i.e., always involve direct attack on noncombatants—then modern war is by its very nature immoral; but that if, on the contrary, modern war is not always "total," one has a moral obligation to differentiate just from unjust military policies through the exercise of practical wisdom.

As a matter of fact, the most recent uses of U.S. military force have been quite "limited" and so provide empirical counterexamples to the editorial's claims. The 24,000 troops deployed in Somalia have protected relief workers and supplies and provided a degree of social order in a country destroyed by civil war among fourteen warring factions. Rather than employing large-scale military violence, the Marines have succeeded in bringing some measure of tranquility to Somalia simply through their armed presence, combined with a highly selective use of force, typically against snipers. The potentially limited nature of contemporary military interventions has also been displayed in last month's restricted, "tit-for-tat" targeting of Iraqi air defense control installations, mobile missile batteries, and hostile MIGs. Criticism did emerge from some coalition partners regarding the targeting of the industrial complex at Zaafaraniyah (the U.S. government claimed the complex played an important role in Saddam Hussein's enriched uranium program), but it seems to me that even this action must be considered a limited response to Iraqi provocation. Warnings were repeatedly issued in response to deliberate provocations and flagrant violations of the UN Security Council resolutions, only military targets were selected, and the degree of force employed was measured. None of this should be taken to diminish the tragedy of unintended civilian casualites in both Somalia and Iraq. In the case of potential military intervention in Bosnia, moreover, political and economic considerations alike support limited kinds of intervention (e.g., restricted to the use of air power), though ironically some strategists now maintain that peace in the region will only be attained through the deployment of significant numbers of ground troops. I say "ironically" because in this scenario, peace would be promoted through a more extensive rather than less extensive military intervention.

If the *Civiltá* editorial's key assumption—that all wars today must of their very nature become "total"—is false—and it seems to be—then we are left not with an absolute prohibition of war but with the just-war criteria narrowly interpreted: a strong presumption against war in general (a presumption by no means shared by all just-war theorists), an absolute prohibition of "total war," and an allowance of limited defensive war. This is in fact the position of Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes*.

The *Civiltá* editorial was clear in detailing the evils of war: the fact that it is usually the poor and the innocent of both sides who suffer the most in war; that just-war tenets are often misused as a pretext for entering war for less than noble reasons, such as greed or political advantage; that the uses of force tend to beget a "spiral of violence"; that wars can be initiated with a just cause but waged in an immoral manner; etc. Yet all of these problems also characterized premodern war to some degree, and were recognized by moralists of the just-war tradition, for whom the burden of proof lay with those who would initiate war. Thomas Aquinas asked in the *Summa theologiae* not whether it is ever a sin for the Christian to fight in war but rather, "Is it always sinful to wage war?" His answer was "no," on the grounds that at times the needs of the common good can temporarily override the presumption against violence. Catholic theologians have repeatedly condemned "total war" on traditional grounds. In a famous article in 1944, John Ford, S.J., argued persuasively that the practice of regarding every citizen as a target—a presumption underlying Allied obliteration bombing—violated the principle of noncombatant immunity.

The tenets of the just-war theory have been considerably modified over the course of the last 1,500 years and there is no reason why the ongoing process of theological and moral development has to be arrested now. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas were not concerned with the principle of proportionality or with the distinction between offensive and defensive war; conversely, we no longer accept the view, held for centuries by the church, that "mocking the faith" justifies attacking "infidels." The tradition has gradually come to reject the right to wage war to punish an offense (*ad vindicandas offensiones*) or to recover property (*ad repetendas res*) and now accepts only war to repel injury and aggression (*ad repellendas injurias*).

The Gulf War and more recent hostilities provide clear examples of why further reflection on just-war tenets is needed.

The application of proportionality to the conflict in the Gulf is a case in point. How can one compare and weigh the value of national sovereignty *vis-à-vis* the lives that might be lost defending it? What would have become of Kuwait had Operation Desert Shield not been succeeded by Desert Storm? When does a certain "price" paid in blood become too high for the value we are attempting to secure or promote? Should the elimination of Iraqi nuclear capacity be calculated into proportionality?

Because of its consequentialist character, proportionality can only be discussed in light of the relevant data. It may well be that, after all is said and done, the empirical evidence on long-

"Wow! This means war*!"*

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term damage leads us to concur with the *Civiltá* editorial—and apparently John Paul II himself—on the disproportionate character of the Gulf War. This judgment, however, can be taken as an indication of the continued *relevance*—rather than the obsolescence—of the "just war" tradition.

The alternative to a careful, ongoing process of moral development of the just-war tradition, practically speaking, is absolute condemnation of all war. In such a case, all Catholics would be required to be conscientious objectors. The category of selective conscientious objector, now acknowledged by the church, would be rendered otiose. There would be no discrimination between particular motives for entering into war, and there would be no guidelines for distinguishing between the various means used in waging war. The church would "opt out" of the public policy debate regarding military intervention and cede any influence over conduct in war to other social influences—a very un-Catholic position, it seems to me, that would effectively serve rather than resist the idolatrous pretension to moral sovereignty that often characterizes the modern nation-state.

The following suggestions may seem obvious, but it is worthwhile to highlight them. Poorly reasoned moral arguments are counterproductive. Moralists and editorial writers need to support their claims with clearly defined principles and reasoning (including, of course, appeals to Scripture and tradition). Theologians who offer moral assertion in place of moral argument undermine their own credibility. In this instance, the anonymous authors of the *Civiltá* editorial failed to establish the coherences among their moral claims: their acceptance of the right to national self-defense does not square with their rejection of the just-war theory.

"Modern War and Christian Conscience" unequivocally stated that all "modern war" is immoral. From this a reader might infer that once a war has begun, the inexorable "inner logic of war" will inevitably lead to direct attacks on civilians, to abuse of prisoners of war, to arbitrary cruelty, and even to the use of "weapons of mass destruction." To reject the just-war theory as the *Civiltá* editorial did might ironically contribute to the so-called "moral realism" that refuses to recognize the moral distinctions between atrocities, massacres, and combat between combatants.

Moral argumentation should avoid the use of gratuitous assumptions. The editorial claimed that modern war is always "total," involving the "whole world"; that war "always produces harm that far exceeds any advantages that may accrue in terms of justice and right"; and that there are always peaceful alternatives to war (and therefore war cannot meet the criterion of "last resort"). These claims are patently false, and they ignore the undeniable fact that not resisting evil with force can at times produce more harm than doing so—as we recall from the fatally mistaken appeasement of Hitler in the 1930s.

Editorial writers and moralists should eschew making misleading suggestions for the sake of rhetoric. The editorial's claim that the Gulf War "caused" the slaughtering of Kurds and Shi'ites and the environmental devastation of the Persian Gulf improperly imputed direct moral responsibility for these atrocious events to the coalition forces, when in fact they were perpetrated by the Iraqis. Of course we need to consider the effects of our actions in a broader way than a mechanical conformity to just-war tenets captures, but we must also develop appropriate distinctions regarding kinds and degrees of responsibility for these problems.

We need to resist the attempt to ground exceptionless moral principles on a few historical cases, and to use historical cases to "proof-text" moral conclusions arrived at on other grounds. To argue that there is an immutable "essence" of modern war that leads it to be universally disproportionate militates against discerning judgment and attentiveness to the actual historical events under consideration. This was exemplified in the editorial's refusal to recognize the clearly limited nature of the Gulf War, as was evidenced, for example in the cease-fire order of February 28, 1991 (however debatable that decision was from a strategic standpoint). Even if we grant that selected provisions of the just-war theory were violated in one specific war—in this case the Gulf War—this does not, in and of itself, invalidate the relevance of these criteria for any and all future cases. Violations can point to either the moral guilt or ignorance of the agent, or the impracticability of the criteria as presently formulated, etc.

We also need to keep in mind the connection between moral norms and the deeper theological "background beliefs" within which they are framed, interpreted, and adjudicated. Catholic pacifists who endorse the editorial, primarily because of its unequivocal repudiation of the just-war theory, need to realize that this also calls into question both the "natural law" basis of that theory and the traditional Catholic affirmation of the harmony of revelation and reason that supports both "natural law" ethics and the just-war theory. Any account of the ethics of war and peace that intends to supplant the just-war approach must ultimately come to terms with the more profound theological interrelation of nature and grace, creation and redemption, and faith and reason that have characterized the Catholic tradition. The understanding of discipleship developed in Catholic circles will be decidedly different from that argued from sectarian or other perspectives.

Finally, we need to recognize that we think and believe within an ongoing religious tradition rather than in an ahistorical vacuum. Ethical norms are not set in stone; they are amenable to creative extension, refinement, or development when necessary. The *Civiltá Cattolica* editorial offered a poignant example of why ongoing reflection on just-war theory is in order. Much more work needs to be done on notions such as proportionality, last resort, the distinction between direct and indirect killing, etc. Catholic moral theology must strive for realism, persuasiveness, and humanity—goals which can be attained only when the arguments used within the church reflect an openness to both the wisdom of the tradition and the truth discerned in concrete historical detail and in rational argument. In this way, theologians, journalists, and the magisterium alike can produce clear, honest, and constructive moral discourse. □

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I THINK YOU SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE

ME, I'M NOT SO SURE

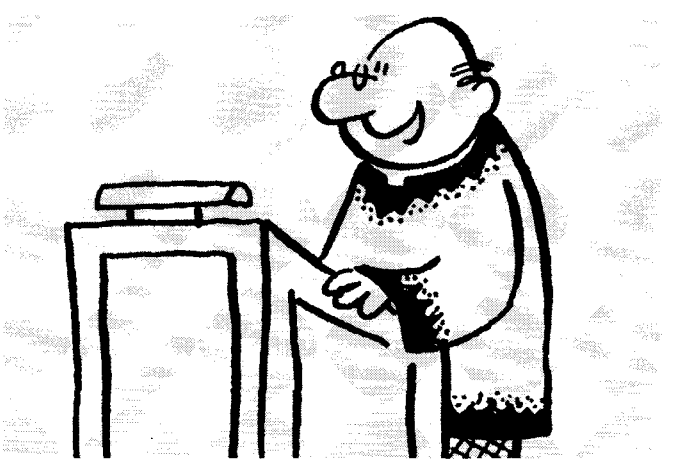
GORDON D. MARINO

Not long ago I was wheeling around the radio dial when I happened to catch a New Age evangelist sermonizing on the importance of eating only organically grown foods. Given the epidemic cancer rate in this country, this seemed like sound advice so I decided to listen for a few minutes to what turned out to be the benediction of a weekly program of mass therapy. Having offered specific dietary counsel, the speaker went on to more general issues. In a softly hypnotic voice she exhorted her flock, "it takes great courage to be healthy." How so, I puzzled? Is it because many of our unhealthy habits, like overeating, alcohol and drug abuse are attempts to stave off anxiety; hence, the pursuit of health requires a willingness to abjure from unhealthy defenses against anxiety? That wasn't exactly her drift. The coda continued, "if you want to be healthy, the first and foremost thing is to be willing to take responsibility for yourself." In other words, the pursuit of health requires the courage to proceed as though the lives we live are nothing more nor less than the lives we have chosen.

The commandment to take responsibility for ourselves is, these days, frequently iterated. Indeed, on a recent Sunday I heard almost the same homily that I had caught on the radio delivered from the pulpit of a local church. Though depressive shades of mind can certainly obscure the fact, we do have more control over our lives than some of us would care to admit. Amongst those with a full belly and a therapist, and, I suppose, amongst those without a full belly and a therapist, much suffering is self-wrought. People neglect their bodies and then moan about their fate on the way to the emergency room. Parents who could not put their ambitions aside for a moment when their children were growing up feel embittered when they begin to comprehend that their now grown Jack and Jill abhor the idea of spending time with them. As the Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, was fond of pointing out, we often create unpleasant states of mind and /or affairs which once set in motion acquire their own momentum and so spin beyond our control. If the truth be told, we are not always as passive in our suffering as our suffering would make us think; which is, in part, to concede that the ukase to take responsibility for oneself has its proper applications. If, however, Freud, Foucault, and other virtuosi of suspicion have taught us anything it is about the necessity of reading our oughts for their connotations and submerged interests. With this kind of an ear cocked, the rhetoric of responsibility carries some potentially disturbing undertones.

There is a relationship between the way we talk to ourselves and the way we talk to others. People who are always snarling at themselves are either always snarling at others or always trying to refrain from snarling. Though most of us are thankfully much less than absolutely consistent, the individual who imagines herself to be the pure product of her own choices is likely to think the same about her neighbor, be that neighbor someone whose most pressing problem is trying to decide whether or not to dip into her principal, or a single mother struggling to find a job, take care of a handicapped son, and come up with the rent on a rat-infested apartment. Whether or not the fanatics of freedom intend the letter of their sermons is an open question, but the claim that we ought to take absolute responsibility for the kind of people we are suggests that we enjoy complete control over our lives. Guess what? We do not.

Depending upon your situation in life, some claims are much easier to assent to than to believe, and yet surely everyone must agree with the essayist Joseph Epstein who writes, "We do not choose to be born. We do not choose our parents. We do not



"On the other hand, social *Darwinism is perfectly okay."*

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choose our historical epoch, the country of our birth, or the immediate circumstances of our upbringing" (*Ambition: The Secret Passion,* Dutton, 1980). And one could go on and on and on. All the clucking about owning one's choices notwithstanding, our lives are shaped by many contingencies. It will, of course, be gainsaid that while we may not be able to control what comes our way, we can at least control our response to it. Put another way, while we cannot choose the circumstances of our lives we cannot help but choose what kind of people we are going to be. Where character is concerned, there are no contingencies. I am both the author and the book; or, to put it in Epstein's terms:

> We do choose how we shall live: courageously or in cowardice, honorably or dishonorably, with purpose or drift. We decide that what makes us significant is either what we do or what we refuse to do. But no matter how indifferent the universe may be to our choices and decisions, these choices and decisions are ours to make. We decide. We choose. And as we decide and choose so are our lives formed.

Interpretation: no matter how horrid our situation, be it Auschwitz or Cambodia, we are still left with choices (e.g., whether or not to live courageous, loving, honest lives) and it is in responding to these choices that we decide what kind of people we are going to be. Despite the nearly unanimous conviction that human beings are nothing if not corruptible, the creedal assumption is that nothing can rob us of our freedom.

Yet the conceptual pressures carried by such an assumption are palpable. That is why we do not want our armed robbers walking free, even though they might plead that they grew up in violent circumstances; nor do we want our friends to lie to us, only to explain that they can't help it because mutual deception was a way of life for their parents. And yet the outer does cast its shadow on the inner.

The circumstances of our lives can render it more or less impossible to make certain movements of the will. Yesterday I read of a farmer who lost his wife and three children to dehydration brought on by a water shortage caused by a long and typically ridiculous civil war. This man could not control the fate of his family but as the old dogma would have it, he can control how he is going to respond to his loss. It is, for instance, up to him whether or not he will become embittered. Or is it? What client of Club Med could chastise such a Job for cursing the day he was born? Those of us in the pink of life have, I think, a responsibility to acknowledge that people who have had the rug, floor, and foundation pulled out from under them are up against a slightly different beast than the rest of us.

For people born into a family with a garden, the tend-to-your-own-garden ethos carries the possible implication that we bear no responsibility toward people who don't have any gardens. The church in which I heard the "take responsibility for yourself" sermon was a wealthy congregation, with considerable resources for helping their neighbors up and down the road. Naturally, the last thing this flock wanted to hear about was rich folk, salvation, and eyes of needles. The next-to-last thing was that as winners in the lottery of material life they ought to stop groaning about low interest rates and spend some of the money they were going to use for that much-needed third vacation to help the horde of people whom life has placed against the wall. Not surprisingly, the first and last thing they did hear was exactly what they wanted to hear, namely, that we all need to take responsibility for ourselves. Though I am not sure that he would want to take responsibility for this moral, the pastor explained that what our impecunious neighbors really need are not Good Samaritans, but rather to take charge of their own lives.

In order to give life to his invocation, the minister discussed the death of Len Bias, a college basketball superstar and high N.B.A. draft choice who died from a drug overdose before he was ever able to take a single jump shot as a pro. Understandably many sports writers blamed this young man's death on the fact that he grew up under crushing circumstances. The shepherd of my flock would, however, have none of this meliorism. He insisted that if anything outside of Len Bias's will were responsible for Len Bias's death it was the acceptance of just this kind of palaver about individuals not being responsible for themselves. The truth, as he intoned it, was that Len Bias was solely to blame for Len Bias's death. Different circumstances would not have made a bit of difference. Had Len Bias played his high school ball at Phillips Exeter, summered on Martha's Vineyard, had a therapist to help him work through his self-destructive impulses, the result still would have been the same, or so this narrative goes. I am not so sure. While I would hate to encourage anyone to think that they cannot control themselves, it is a mistake to pretend that the nurturing environ-

Jack Lindeman

2 A.M.

Tonight in my thick coat
I am ashamed of nothing.
I offer my hands
as a gesture to stars.
I offer my fingers
to a touch of frostbite.

The windows are dark
like the faces of dead soldiers
and I conjure my neighbor
who cuddles her insomnia
like a child wishfully imagined
in the cradle of her extricated womb.

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ment which we all struggle to provide for our children is actually of no moral or characterological consequence. Just as the well-to-do will find it infinitely more difficult to adopt certain spiritual postures than someone less (but, as faith might have it, more) fortunate, so will the downtrodden find it more difficult than others to will themselves into certain states of mind (e.g., confidence about the future, or a conviction that it is a just world and that hard work will be rewarded). Poverty, no less than riches, but in a different way, can severely diminish the sway we have over ourselves.

Some years ago President Ronald Reagan was being pressured about the exponentially increasing number of people without roofs over their heads. At one of these pressure points, he burbled that it wouldn't do any good to sacrifice public funds for the homeless because most of the folks who were sleeping on grates were doing so out of their own free will. Most of us who caught this gaffe thought the president was hyperextending the concept of free choice in order to beg out of his social obligations. The rhetoric of responsibility is, I think, often put to the same self-excusing purpose and as such it is capable of undermining our sense of social responsibility. The moralists who preach that those without boots ought to pull themselves up by the bootstraps ought at least to recognize that of all possible messages, this moral is, strangely enough, the one which taxes them the least. □

SCREEN

TWO BUMS

'HOFFA' & 'CHAPLIN'

In the newspaper ads for *Hoffa*, Jack Nicholson glowers out at us like a man with a particularly bad case of hemorrhoids nearing the end of a six-hour bus trip. And underneath his picture the advertising geniuses have written, "He did what he had to do." Who says there's no truth in advertising anymore? That caption perfectly encompasses the not quite breathtaking moral scope of David Mamet's script. From this movie you will learn that the world is a corrupt place and to get anything whatsoever accomplished you have to get your hands dirty and eventually you become corrupt yourself and the hypocritical world stomps you not to punish your corruption but to save its own virtuous face. That's exactly what happened to Jimmy Hoffa. The wheels of justice? Don't make me laugh. A pipsqueak only trying to prove himself to his older brother. Any more questions? No, of course not. Class dismissed.

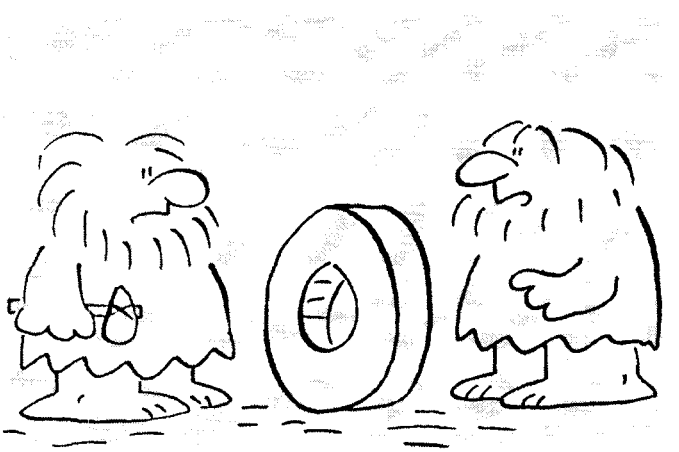
Thank you, Professor Mamet.

Of course, if the movie had some texture, some surprises in its storytelling or its style, there would be rewards for staying with it despite its paltry cynicism. But Mamet has only one surprise in store for us and I will now spring it on you.

The hero of *Hoffa* isn't Hoffa. The protagonist is a completely fictional character called Bobby Ciarro (played by director Danny DeVito), a truck driver befriended by the up-and-coming Teamster organizer. Ciarro becomes Hoffa's henchman and rises with his boss. And just in case we're such numbskulls who wouldn't know that the cronies of union bosses enjoy certain perks, Manet obligingly and boringly spends several minutes of this overlong movie showing us Bobby using his connections to evade speeding tickets, get access to gangster power brokers, and enjoy the company of high-priced call girls. What has happened to Mamet's sense of dramatic economy?

To be sure, there is a central idea to the Ciarro-Hoffa relationship. Hoffa's "befriending" of Bobby always manifests itself as damage. He wins Ciarro over to the union cause first by getting him fired from a desperately needed job and then by having him serve as replacement for a henchman who is accidently killed on a thuggish mission. You can see Mamet's intent: he is trying to portray Hoffa indirectly, through the ultimately pernicious effect he has on a Joe Average. By watching Bobby's corruption and destruction, we perceive Hoffa as a perilous master who blasts even as he befriends. But for this concept to work dramatically instead of remaining a mere concept, Mamet would have had to place the viewer very deep within Ciarro's perception of his friend and boss. And this he simply fails to do. Bobby trots through the movie, performing one errand after another. He's never a character, only a device to keep the plot in motion. DeVito's performance, though well balanced, both forceful and restrained, can't disguise the sheer functionality of his role.

Though he's not the protagonist, Hoffa necessarily has all the show-stopping public scenes in the movie: he bellows at picket lines, punches out company goons, defies Bobby Kennedy and Senate subcommittees. Jack Nicholson obviously realized that he was hired to do a star turn and he picks up his paycheck with honor. The actor has done his homework admirably: the stiff neck, the bantam strut, the slavically slitted eyes, the whine that is both self-pitying and menacing—the Hoffa carapace has been admirably assembled by this dynamic actor and he struts his stuff. I enjoyed this performance without taking any of it



"You realize, don't you, that this will eventually lead to a Teamsters' Union?"

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seriously for a second. It's a contraption, not a characterization.

In fact, the whole movie is a contraption that pretends to be a serious study of corruption. Big, baleful men in dark suits slip in and out of cars transporting suitcases filled with money, but where exactly does the money go? Into Hoffa's private pockets or into his union projects? At one point, a workers' recreation center is mentioned by Hoffa; the next second he sneers at the idea himself. So where does that leave us? This movie makes a show of getting at the human roots of mendacity, but its only real concern is with the flourishes and trappings of corruption.

DeVito's direction seems driven by sheer desperation: arty camera angles, tricky editing, meaningless use of slow-motion photography, inappropriately heartwarming music every time there's a melee (do DeVito and his composer think that a picket-line brawl expresses the heartland of America?). The movie is sometimes embarrassing even at the strictly technical level. Example: the convicted Hoffa is driven to jail in a police wagon on a highway lined with grateful Teamsters who cheer their fallen hero. The view of the crowd through the car's window is, of course, a traveling shot. But then we have a reverse angle of the smiling Hoffa acknowledging the cheers—and the car isn't in motion! Did everybody fall asleep in the editing room? When filmmakers nod off, why shouldn't the audience do the same?

No one can say that Charles Chaplin isn't the one and only hero of Richard Attenborough's *Chaplin*. He's not only the hero; he's virtually the only thing in the movie. There aren't any other characters, only the mannequins whose function is to evoke some show of emotion from The Great Man. Brother and business manager Sydney is always around urging Charlie to be cautious, to betray his art for the sake of profit. But the Great Man always defies the voice of caution and remains true to himself and his art. Douglas Fairbanks is brought to brief, dazzling life by splendid Kevin Kline only to turn into a has-been so that Charlie can show compassion. The various wives and mistresses all put in three-minute appearances just to evoke our hero's kindness and/or frustrated longings. Only John Thaw (Inspector Morse on PBS's "Mystery") as music hall impresario Fred Karno seems to have an existence apart from Chaplin's, partly because Thaw is first-rate but mainly because Karno's ego was as massive as the young genius he hired.

The movie's shallowness is fully revealed in its treatment of the second wife, Lita Grey. When the editor of Chaplin's autobiography asks Charlie why he has said so little about Lita, the reply is, "Because I detested the little bitch." And that's that. Attenborough seems never to have asked himself what there was in this woman that left Chaplin speechless in his enmity so many years after the marriage. If he had, he might have had to create scenes in which a real man faced off against a real woman. But Attenborough isn't interested in testing his hero; he's too busy genuflecting before him. Robert Downey Jr., who does at least as well as Jack Nicholson in capturing the physical characteristics of his assignment, ends up giving a skillful performance not of a genius but of an endlessly forbearing melancholic.

Charles Chaplin would have loved this movie. That's what is wrong with it.

RICHARD ALLEVA

STAGE

LILTING LIBRETTOS

'WALLPAPER' & 'ORPHEUS'

At a seminar before the first of three performances of *The Yellow Wallpaper* given last December at the Manhattan School of Music, Ronald Perera (music) and Constance Congdon (libretto) explained the strategies they used in making an opera of the Charlotte Perkins Gilman story, which has become a staple of American literature anthologies and courses since the growing interest in women writers has altered the canon in so many colleges. At one point, Congdon said that working on the piece had been fascinating and advised "any playwrights in the audience" to consider writing a libretto themselves. One playwright who was not in the audience had already done that. The night after I saw *The Yellow Wallpaper*, I saw *Orpheus in Love* at the Circle Rep; Craig Lucas had done the libretto to Gerald Busby's music.

The narrator/protagonist of Gilman's turn-of-the-century story is a woman suffering from what she calls a "temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency" and a comic character in the opera called "Neur—as—then—i—a." Her doctor-husband has put her on a regimen devised by the celebrated nerve specialist S. Weir Mitchell (as was Gilman until, unlike her heroine, she escaped). Mitchell is mentioned in the story and appears as a lecturer on the edge of the action in the opera. The protagonist is to rest, exercise, eat heartily, take tonics, but she is to avoid any kind of excitement, which means no work, minimal conversation, no writing (the story is what she has written in her secret notebook). At first appalled by the ugly wallpaper, she becomes obsessed with it, tries to follow the pattern, and comes to see that the pattern behind the pattern is a woman (or a group of women) trapped by the exterior design. At the end, she has ripped the wallpaper from the walls to free the woman—to escape because she sees herself as the woman—and is creeping around and around the edges of the room, having been driven mad by her husband's loving but oppressive cure.

To get the precise feel of the Gilman story, a dramatic piece would have to be a solo performance, like *Sorry, Wrong Number* or *The Human Voice*; there has apparently been such a musical piece although I have not seen it. Congdon, however, working with Perera and director Mark Harrison, chose to go outside the room, to create a world beyond the character's isolation, if

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only to heighten it. Pulling away from the festivities of a Fourth of July picnic, Charlotte (Congdon has given Gilman's name to the unnamed protagonist of the story) sings, "I'm in a room wherever I am./I'm in a room wherever I go." She feels much closer to the women in the wallpaper (the women's chorus), particularly to her other self who often moves in sync with her. The characters—even her husband John and his sister Jennie—are largely stereotypes, but they are used either to dramatize her situation (the restraints John and Jennie put on her) or—in the case of the nursemaid, the handymen, the realtor and his daughters—to contrast the presumably ordinary world with her distressed one. Many of the apparently casual lines that these characters speak have deeper resonance, at least in retrospect. In the first scene, the busybody of a realtor, intent on pleasing his renters, keeps saying, "We can do that for you," a line that grates in the memory as soon as we realize that Charlotte is invalided by not being free to do for herself.

The split perspective in the opera means that it never achieves the intensity of the last horrifying scene in the story. The events are there, but the force is lost. Partly that is intentional or, as Congdon suggested in the seminar, a happy accident of having introduced the two little girls. In the picnic scene, at their father's insistence, they sing a song about a little hen who "washed up the dishes./And kept the house clean," a schoolhouse vision of the role of women. In the last scene, as Charlotte is led out, they sing a secret song, snatches of which they have sung before, about a little girl who would not obey, who would only please herself, and who "flew very high, very high, very high." This promise that women would not always be trapped in yellow wallpaper is underlined by the fact that Congdon has moved Gilman's 1892 story to 1899. A new century, a new beginning. Well, maybe; the last image is of the startled nurse staring in confusion at the notebook Charlotte left behind.

There is something particularly attractive about opening an opera with a trio—a bass and two bassoons. So *Orpheus in Love* begins. The bassoonists accompany this contemporary Orpheus as he tosses and turns in his bed trying to fall asleep. The first act is very funny, musically and verbally, but physically as well; this stage business may come from director Kirsten Sanderson for there is no hint of it in the printed text (*Bomb*, Spring, 1992). At one point three-fourths of a string quartet share his bed; the double bass is too big to invade the human bass's territory. In comic sequences, we meet his father and his first piano teacher, both dead, and his Eurydice, a reluctant student of the viola. The second act turns somewhat more serious as the bass woos, wins, and loses his soprano (the nameless characters are identified in the program only by voice or instrument) and rescues her from hell only to lose her again. Finally, standing with the dead, she returns him to his music. End on the replenishing sound of the viola.

It is probably perverse to discuss opera in terms of libretti, but it is Congdon's fault—that remark about opera's appeal to the playwright. Still, in both cases, the music and the libretto work together. Perera's is an eclectic score, moving through many genres, from folk song to reasonably complicated manipulation of his five-note theme. Busby's is as exuberant and as light (in all senses of the word) as Lucas's libretto. If *Orpheus* was more impressive in performance than *Wallpaper*, it may have been because the professional cast had much more experience, but the Manhattan School students—particularly Peggy Kriha as Charlotte—served Perera and Congdon and Gilman extremely well.

GERALD WEALES

MEDIA

BEBOP TAKES A HARD SHOT

DIZZY GILLESPIE, R.I.P.

Dizzy Gillespie died on the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6, 1993.

Now you're going to read, or most likely have already read, a lot of testimonials to Dizzy that will tell you that, in the mid-1940s, he and Charlie Parker virtually reinvented jazz—which is to say, virtually reinvented American music—which is to say, no kidding, changed the world as we hear it. And if you believe, as I do, that jazz—not literature, not dance, not drama, but jazz—*is* the American Sublime, then I needn't try to convince you that the passing of John Birks Gillespie, born 1917 in Cheraw, South Carolina, is a moment of high solemnity in the secret, psychic history of the republic. And, of course, if you've ever listened to his music, you don't even need to have read this paragraph. I think it was that good man, Nat Hentoff, who once wrote, "Dizzy is a cosmic force": that was not hyperbole.

The morning after our annual Twelfth Night party I woke up and after the requisite coffee and cigarettes played, not anything by Gillespie, but my tape of Milos Forman's *Amadeus*. Let me tell you why.

In the early forties, in New York, a bunch of young musicians found themselves gigging together occasionally, running into one another socially, and talking a lot about music and the ways they could make their music better, make it more *their* music. Among them were John Gillespie who played trumpet, Charles Christopher Parker who played alto saxophone, and Thelonious Sphere Monk who played piano. They had a few things in common: they were all African-Americans, they were all unknown and very likely to remain so, and they were, astonishingly, all possessed of genius. By the end of the decade the music they forged had become widely accepted and admired by white folks—the very people for whom it had *not* been designed—and had come to be called "Bebop." Now "Bebop" is a pretty stupid name. But then, "jazz" is a pretty stupid name, too: in New Orleans, circa 1900, it was simply a local variant on the f-word (the only word in English, by the way—ask any Chicagoan—that can serve as all eight parts of speech). Would you call Mozart's music, say, "Doodly-doop?" It's significant—no dammit, it's revelatory—that the American establishment

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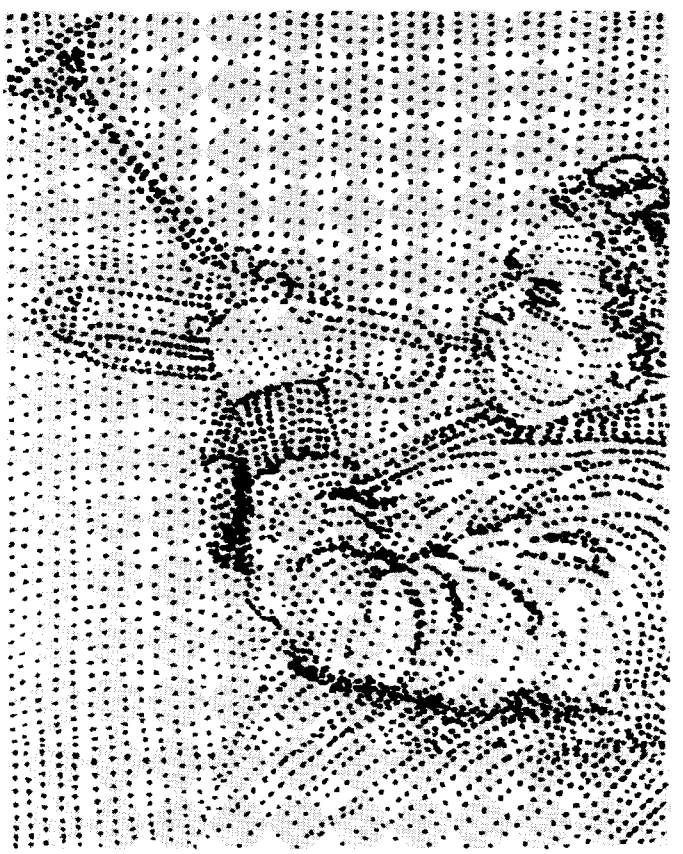
has systematically invented marketing terms for our greatest cultural achievement that are either trivializing or (all puns intended) denigrating.

And that was the point of the music. What Diz, Bird, and Monk—and Bud Powell and Max Roach and Fats Navarro and Tadd Dameron and that whole largely doomed, blessed battalion (Max, *insh'Allah*, being still with us)—what these men were *about* was creating a music that white guys *couldn't* play, couldn't water down or nice-nelly or co-opt into the kind of pabulum suitable for the junior prom. Bebop is very fast; it is harmonically very complicated; it is very angry, even forty years after it was first recorded. Listen to "Dizzy Atmosphere," recorded in 1945. It will only take two minutes and forty seconds of your time. The tempo is, like, allegro cubed. Bird and Diz play the tune in perfect unison. Bird solos first, eating up the changes like a Pac-Man from hell and you wonder if the bastard ever takes a breath. And then Dizzy. Dizzy on open horn, with that clarion, almost baroque-trumpet heartstopping clarity of tone that was his trademark and the despair of everybody who came after, bending notes at will and in absolute control of the horn and—it's the subtext—daring anybody else to play that high, that fast, and that smart. As I said, it takes less than three minutes to listen to. And for all it implies, it's at least as important an event in the growth of the national soul as, say, *The Great Gatsby*.

Bird, of course, was the more talked-about, the more mythicized, and—in very painful truth—the more overwhelmingly gifted of the two. Self-destructive, alcoholic, heroin-addicted, and maybe sociopathic, he was—is—quite simply the greatest artist this country has produced. And he died in 1955, at thirty-four—the same age Mozart died—leaving behind some of the most godlike music ever played and, less fortunately, one more version of the artist-as-doomed-figure mystique that has been the bane of Western civilization ever since the dawn of the Romantic era—where, of couse, we still live.



Which is why I watched *Amadeus* in my personal wake for Dizzy. Because, you see, Dizzy refused to buy into the devil's fiction that the price of genius is self-immolation—and, my God, how many American artists altogether have been poisoned by that stupidity? No musician since Louis Armstrong was so happy with his audiences. To be great; to be successful; and to survive. The American mechanism of fame will allow you any two of these, but very, very seldom all three. And that Diz did all three, like Louis, like Duke, like Robert Frost and Wallace Stevens and damned few others, argues for a certain greatness and toughness of soul.

His generosity and sponsorship of other musicians was as legendary as Miles's inexplicable rages. And his loyalties were a thing of beauty: years later, asked about Bird, he could say, in a haunting phrase, "Charlie Parker—the other side of my heartbeat." (And, of course, the night Bird died it was Diz who, after finishing his gig, drove across town to take charge of—and pay for—the funeral arrangements.) And the last sentence of his 1980 autobiography, *To Be...or Not to Bop,* is, "When I take my last breath, it'll be a happy one." And last year, there were festivals all around the world honoring his seventy-fifth birthday, most of which he was too ill to attend.

That's all wonderful, and a long way from Cheraw, S.C. But what moves me more than the joy of it all, what makes it all terribly important, is that Dizzy managed it without ever once ceasing to be that brilliant, angry, and *careful* young man who recorded "Dizzy Atmosphere" in 1945. The triumph of Diz is that of genius, but also of a life well and truly lived. Ask any American artist—not just any African-American artist—which is the harder dance to dance.

I'd bleed to say his work got better and stronger over the years, but it didn't. Like Frost, again, he seems to have found his own perfection very early on, and to have decided, quite reasonably, that perfection is the one thing you don't need to mess with. Anytime you heard him, with his numerous big bands, or in his pairings with virtually anybody who was anybody in jazz, you'd be hearing—Diz. And it would be just as fresh and just as joyful, as truly humanizing, as the Diz you could hear from the forties, when he found out who he was and what he could do. And he continued to thrive, with the same energy and intelligence as the music he made, until the beauty of the music and the beauty of the career were virtually one thing: an epiphany, if you wish, of what an American artist can do and be, with enough heart. Like the song says, "Didn't he ramble,/ All around town, / Didn't he ramble, / Till the Butcher cut him down."

In a crucial scene in Clint Eastwood's *Bird*, Samuel E. Wright as Dizzy says to Forest Whittaker as the ailing Charlie Parker: "I'm a reformer—and you're trying to be a martyr." And then, with a sigh, "And they always remember the martyr longer." Wrong, Diz: very, very wrong.

FRANK McCONNELL

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Taylor's significant horizons

THE ETHICS OF AUTHENTICITY
Charles Taylor
Harvard University Press, $17.95, 142 pp.

MULTICULTURALISM AND 'THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION'
Charles Taylor
Princeton University Press, $14.95, 112 pp.

David McCabe

According to Charles Taylor, professor of philosophy and political science at McGill University, modern moral philosophy, and much of modernity itself, is in a state of deep conceptual confusion. If we wish to restore clarity to our thinking both about ourselves and our values in the modern age, says Taylor, we must clearly understand the course of intellectual history that has led to our current crisis. Taylor's *Sources of the Self* (Harvard), published in 1989, attempted to chart this history and to chronicle, according to its subtitle, "The Making of the Modern Identity." In *Sources*, Taylor argued that modern moral philosophy was premised on a denuded conception of the self which utterly neglected the importance to our identities of what he called "strong evaluations"—a shorthand term for the various ideals which, for each of us, make life worth living. Because it fails to account for the importance of these ideals, he claimed, modern philosophy tends to exhibit deep confusion in its approach to moral problems. His goal in *Sources*, then, was to show where moral philosophy had gone wrong and to make it more responsive to our lives by restoring a richer and more humane conception of the self.

In *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Taylor again employs the method of historical reconstruction, this time in order to account for what he calls the "three malaises" of modernity: the widespread loss of meaning, the belief that there can be no reasoned argument about values, and the increasingly bleak prospects for healthy self-government in the age of special-interest politics. The bulk of the book, however, is devoted to the first malaise. Taylor begins by connecting the onset of this existential uncertainty with the rise of individualism, consciously echoing themes put forth by those he identifies as the "knockers" of modernity (figures like Allan Bloom and Christopher Lasch) who see the age of individualism as bound up with a value relativism that leads inevitably to a culture of narcissism. But Taylor is unwilling to go along with what he sees as the knockers' blanket condemnation of the rise of individualism, and against them he maintains that modernity's emphasis on individualism embodies a valuable ideal which we should not lose sight of. According to Taylor, the rise of individualism grew out of an ideal of authenticity which can be traced back to Rousseau and Herder and which originally embodied the ideal of a higher life, premised on the possibility of a distinction between what we *actually* desire and what we *ought* to desire.

But over time, argues Taylor, this evaluative element disappeared and the ideal of authenticity was corrupted: the notion of an external standard which we should strive to live up to was replaced by the self-confirming, vacuous idea of choice as a good in itself. But as Taylor forcefully argues, this notion of choice as a good in itself, independent of external standards, leads ultimately to a sense of meaninglessness, for in order to feel that my choice is genuinely significant, I must acknowledge a standard external to myself, a "horizon of significance" against which I can be measured. As Taylor says, "Which issues are significant, I do not determine. If I did, no issue would be significant." These horizons of significance, Taylor suggests, are constructed not monologically but dialogically, in conversation with my culture, my tradition, my peers, and so on, and in devaluing these ties individualism further leads to a sense that the self is isolated and, in the end, insignificant.

Having explored in some depth the first malaise, Taylor claims to have made some inroads into overcoming the second malaise as well, for he has shown by example that reasoned argument has a place in discussions about values. He also offers a glimmer of hope for the rather dismal and fragmented state of contemporary politics (the third malaise), suggesting that we must broaden our conception of what the political process is about and must move beyond a model of adversary politics centering around individual rights, toward a greater recognition of issues relating to the common good.

The value of opening ourselves to alternative conceptions is also one of Taylor's chief concerns in his extended essay "The Politics of Recognition" (which is published along with four commentary essays). Here he covers some of

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the same ground as in *Authenticity*, the major difference being that it contains a close analysis of two practical issues: legislation recognizing the special status of French-speaking Quebeckers, and multiculturalism.

While his discussion of each of these topics is instructive, his comments about multiculturalism in particular demonstrate his knack for finding sensible middle ground between unreasonable extremes. Against multiculturalism's strongest opponents, he points out that the study of other cultures promises greater understanding not only of those cultures but of our own as well. But he is skeptical as well of the radical multiculturalist's claim that all cultures are equally worthy. The problem with this view, as Taylor astutely points out, is that judgments about the worth of any culture (our own included) ought to follow from our study of that culture; the radical multiculturalist, however, *presupposes* the answer which our study is, or ought to be, in search of. While we should start from "a presumption of equal worth" when confronting other cultures, says Taylor, multiculturalism must allow that we may find other cultures to be as valuable as our own, less so, or more so. As in the case of individualism, there is a need for external standards when making cross-cultural evaluations as well.

Much of what Taylor says in these two works is, I think, eminently reasonable and worth listening to. Though he is not a particularly memorable stylist, his writing here is clear, direct, and refreshingly free of philosophical jargon. He is also delightfully nonpartisan; his sights are set wide, and both the "Right" and the "Left" come under his fire. Indeed, one of the great virtues of Taylor's broad-minded approach is that it suggests the limitations inherent in these traditional designations.

But while I am largely sympathetic to his viewpoint, I suspect there is a dilemma looming behind much of Taylor's argument which may ultimately doom any attempt to find middle ground between the boosters and the knockers of individualism. The horns of the dilemma are these: If I sincerely believe that certain objective standards are binding upon me independent of my will, it follows that I will be more inclined to hold you to these standards and less likely to accept your arguments for failing to live up to them; thus, the threat to freedom. If, on the other hand, I respect your right to live according to the ideals you choose, it appears that in doing so I see your act of choice as itself bestowing value; thus, the specter of meaninglessness. In the end, then, we must face the possibility that between these poles, there may simply be no middle ground.

But we should not fault Taylor for failing to resolve this dilemma, for it is not his alone but belongs to our age. At a time in human history when the meaning of our lives appears more problematic than ever before, we may be expected to feel that even in our clearest moments of understanding we do little more than see through a glass, darkly. Taylor cannot make that glass clear, for he is only human, but his efforts go some way to making things seem a bit less dim. For that alone, he merits our serious attention. □

REVIEWERS

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A MUTED HURRAH

THE RASCAL KING
The Life and Times of James Michael Curley (1874-1958)
Jack Beatty
Addison Wesley, $25, 571 pp.

John E. McDonough

How far will we let our elected leaders go? What are the limits of our tolerance of graft, demagoguery, and other assorted sins? How far do good works, ethnic or socio-economic privation, or extraordinary charisma make up for one's misdeeds?

Though the characters constantly change, these age-old questions are as urgent and difficult today as they were generations ago in the times of Tammany Hall and Teapot Dome. *Atlantic Monthly* editor Jack Beatty examines them again in the case of James Michael Curley. Curley left an indelible mark on the politics and culture of Boston during a fifty-year political career that saw him elected governor, mayor, congressman, and alderman. Thrice indicted, twice jailed, enshrined in literature and film by Edwin O'Connor's *The Last Hurrah*, and tortured by personal tragedy, Curley had no neutrals standing in judgment of him—for most people he was either the complete hero or the consummate villain.

Oftentimes our judgment of a politician's behavior is compromised by the timing of unflattering disclosures. We tend to overlook indiscretions of incumbent officeholders that would never be tolerated with newcomers. And personal familiarity makes hard judgments even more difficult. It's been that way with Curley and me—my mother worked for twelve years as Curley's maid in his famous (or infamous) mansion on Boston's Jamaicaway, where shamrocks were carved into the shutters as Curley's way of thumbing his nose at Boston Brahmins and others who stood against him.

Like Beatty, I grew up in a household where Curley's name was held in reverence. "For the Irish Americans...he was a political and cultural hero, an axial figure in their annals," writes Beatty. Though

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the Irish had already become the dominant ethnic group in Boston by the turn of the century, and though other Irish Americans preceded him in political prominence (including John F. Kennedy's maternal grandfather, Mayor John "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald), Curley brashly represented for his time what Harold Washington declared to black Chicagoans on the night of his mayoral victory: "It's our turn!"

But unlike other big-city mayors such as Al Smith or Richard Daley, Curley did not build an all-encompassing machine. Instead, this was "the main thread in Curley's public life: doing little things for little people who repaid him in votes and gratitude, who as the years went by and they tasted something of the world's indifference, magnified manifold the value of the little things Curley had done for them." More than a million witnesses to Curley's funeral procession in 1958 testified to this loyalty.

Those not helped by him were aware of other aspects of Curley's life: a spellbinding and unforgettable voice and rhetoric; an uncanny sense of political theater and entertainment; and a deeply tragic and unending string of personal losses that hit him with regularity, including the early deaths of his wife and four of his six children, two on the same day in February 1950.

Though essentially a local figure, Curley also made his mark on the national scene, leading the fight against immigration restrictions in Congress in 1913, and speaking out against growing anti-Semitism in the 1940s. His public works projects at the start of the Great Depression anticipated much of the New Deal. He risked his career by jilting the Al Smith bandwagon in 1932 to back Franklin Delano Roosevelt, became the local hero again with F.D.R.'s victory, and ended up the jilted suitor when allegedly promised federal jobs did not materialize. These associations were also balanced by an outspoken admiration of Mussolini and an alliance with the fascistic Father Charles Coughlin.

To Beatty, Curley's positive attributes could not outweigh the negative. First and foremost was an unending penchant for graft. The mansion, the array of servants, the vacation homes, the lavish global trips—all were evidence of a man living far beyond the means of modest governmental salaries. "He was not the only politician in American history to have been reelected from jail, but he was surely alone in having twice been in jail while in office, at either end of his career, a parenthesis of disgrace."

Even worse than these transgressions, Beatty faults Curley for adding to the poisoned waters of Massachusetts politics. The enmity between Boston Yankee and Irish began long before Curley, reaching back centuries to their native lands, and locally to the 1840s and the burning of a Catholic convent by rampaging Nativists. But at a time when Irish political strength was nearing its peak, Curley did not attempt to heal the wounds; he opened them wider, exploiting them for his own purposes.

So why did Boston voters buy him for so long? I find the answer in the writings of Vaclav Havel: "They say a nation gets the politicians it deserves. In some senses this is true: politicians are indeed a mirror of their society, and a kind of embodiment of its potential. At the same time—paradoxically—the opposite is also true: society is a mirror of its politicians. It is largely up to the politicians which social forces they choose to liberate and which they choose to suppress, whether they rely on the good in each citizen or on the bad."

The Rascal King is a compelling and rich journey through a hundred years of Boston history, and an in-depth chronicle of the life of a man whose contributions and transgressions were monumental. But in the end, the scales are clearly weighed in the negative for James Michael Curley, at least as far as Beatty is concerned. □

FEAR NO ISLAM

THE ISLAMIC THREAT
Myth or Reality
John Esposito
Oxford University Press, $22, 243 pp.

George Perkovich

"The Muslims Are Coming! The Muslims Are Coming!"; "Iran Resurgent"; "Iran's Lethal Secret." These headlines have a tabloid flavor, but they appear in some of America's leading newspapers and magazines. Nothing is simpler in American political culture than hyping alarm over Islam. Headline writers and book editors find it profitable to press the Islamic button, and national security bureaucracies do, too. At a time when old threats have waned, the "Green Peril" of Islam can give new purpose to well-worn and lavishly equipped strategies of containment.

Yet the alarmists are shouting fire in a combustible theater—one in which exits have not been marked. America's foreign policy architects offer no strategy for escaping the heralded danger; no way of telling whether the alarm is false or exaggerated. One billion Muslims inhabit the earth, comprising majorities in forty-five countries. Birthrates in Islamic societies are the world's highest, while the bulk of the globe's oil reserves sit beneath their

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territories. Clearly, Islamic societies will profoundly affect all aspects of international life through the twenty-first century. But the nations that have led the world through the twentieth century have little idea how to engage with these societies in anything but frightened, befuddled, and adversarial terms.

To develop a strategy for dealing with Islamic societies—individual nation-states as well as the collective religio-culture of Islam—we must first understand "the problem." This is the purpose of *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* And in it John Esposito, an accomplished Middle Eastern specialist from Holy Cross College, has explored a major foreign policy problem confronting American society and leadership today accessibly and with care.

"In the 1990s," Esposito writes, "it is important that the vacuum created by the end of the cold war not be filled by exaggerated fears of Islam as a resurgent 'evil empire' at war with the new world order and a challenge to global stability." Instead of threat-mongering, the operative question should be: "How can U.S. policy transform the specter of an Islamic threat into the pursuit of a common global future?"

Esposito never completely answers this question. Instead, in a work that provides enough historical background for non-specialists to follow easily, he deconstructs the myth and image of raging monolithic "Islamic fundamentalism." Readers will learn to discard inimical clichés. Esposito eschews the pop term "fundamentalism," which he regards "as too laden with Christian presuppositions and Western stereotypes, as well as implying a monolithic threat that does not exist." Instead, he speaks of "Islamic revivalism" or "Islamic activism," which are "less value-laden and have roots within Islamic tradition."

Esposito judiciously distinguishes among Islamic movements in various societies and nation-states. He points out the ways in which Islamic leaders—Qaddafi, Khomeni, Sadat—differ markedly from one another, and in the cases of Qaddafi and Sudan's Gaafar Muhammed Nimeiri, an American ally, how they cynically use the Islamic mantle to obscure practices that have little to do with religion, faith, or the well-being of the community. "More often than not, rulers and governments have used Islam, as they have used other ideologies, to solidify power rather than to promote political participation. Heads of state (kings, generals, former military officers) have found it a useful tool...to enhance their authority, buttress nationalism, legitimate policies and programs, and increase popular support."

Conversely, popular-based Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt fulfill real socioeconomic needs. Distinct from the small terrorist groups which have become synonymous with Islamic fundamentalism to many Americans, the much more numerous Islamic movements represent mainstream reactions to the oppression, corruption, exclusiveness, and inequality of their current governmental and economic orders, and a resentment over the West's role in creating and sustaining these for the last several centuries. "Their goal is the transformation of society through the Islamic formation of individuals at the grassroots level," by operating hospitals, clinics, legal-aid societies, schools, child-care centers, youth camps, newspapers, radio stations, etc. Typically urban-based and attractive to educated members of the middle and lower classes, these movements lead the call for political reform and human rights.

If they were not tainted with Muslimness, many Islamic activists would be the "good guys" from an American perspective. In the language of the 1992 American presidential election, the Islamic activists have recognized that the people want change and they have demonstrated that they are the agents of that change. However, Esposito acknowledges that Islamic activists will probably stop short of full-fledged democracy and tolerance. "An ideologically oriented Islamic state would be at best a limited democracy with a weak pluralistic profile; its ideological orientation would restrict the participation of non-Muslims in key government positions, and the existence of political parties representing a competing ideology or orientation." This issue deserves fuller treatment than Esposito gives it.

In determining the American interest *vis-à-vis* Islamic nation-states, citizens and leaders must focus on these nations' foreign policies. How do Islamic states seek to influence us? And here the chimera of an Islamic monolith evaporates in a nanosecond. The Islamic community is riven by conflict and competing interests, above and beyond the Shiite-Sunni division. Qaddafi was an enemy of Sadat and Nimeiri; Saddam Hussein waged war on Iran and Kuwait; Khomeini's Iran sought to subvert Saudi Arabia; Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia compete for influence in the central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union. Globally, Libya and Iran struggle against the United States, while Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Pakistan, Turkey, etc., have been formal or informal American allies. "National interest and regional politics rather than ideology or religion remain the major determinants in the formulation of foreign policy," Esposito rightly summarizes.

One reason it has been hard for Americans to identify our national interest in dealing with Islamic societies is that the media, academia, and policymakers collectively have failed to explain "the 'who' and the 'why' of history, the specific causes or reasons behind the headlines." Like McCarthy-era anti-communism, Islam-baiting inhibits academics and government advisors from questioning orthodox portrayals of an unswerving fundamentalist threat. Esposito decries the tendency to dismiss "the reasons given by activists (and indeed by many Arabs and Muslims) for their criticism of the West." Among these motivations are: "imperialism, America's tilt toward Israel, and its support of oppressive regimes (the Shah's Iran, Nimeiri's Sudan.)" More recently, many Muslims perceive the American-led new world order as fundamentally anti-Islam, citing, for example, the alacrity with which the U.S. attacked Iraq, contrasted to passivity before Serb slaughter of Bosnia's Muslims. (This neglects American leadership in saving Muslim Somali lives while Islamic nations contribute nearly nothing.)

Although Esposito stops short of offering an explicit strategy for transforming the specter of an Islamic threat into a partner in building a common future, he

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does say that such a strategy must recognize the reasonableness of many of the Islamic activists' beliefs and goals. Their societies do need fundamental reform. While Islamic activists may be better at opposition than in government—they tend to lack adequate training and experience in political, economic, and legal management to run effective governments—they will increasingly win the allegiance of their fellow citizens. As in Algeria recently, this allegiance may be expressed at the ballot box. How hypocritical and counterproductive, then, for the United States to look the other way and bless with silence the denial of democracy in Algeria and elsewhere. When the authoritarian Algerian government cried "fundamentalists!" and effected a coup, the U.S. jettisoned its principles and, by inaction, sided with the junta.

"The United States must be willing to demonstrate by word and action its belief that the right of self-determination and representative government includes acceptance of an Islamically oriented state and society, if that reflects the popular will and does not directly threaten U.S. interests," Esposito concludes. Primacy must be attached to supporting tendencies toward human rights and political participation, something which President Bill Clinton has stated as a pillar of his foreign policy. This strategy will fail, however, if it is heavyhanded and self-righteous. It requires nuance, pragmatism, and an empathetic tolerance of context. These are precisely the attributes vitiated by our current portrayal of the fundamentalist threat. □

ON THE ONE HAND...

NATURAL HISTORY
Maureen Howard
Norton, $23, 393 pp.

Irving Malin

This brilliant novel deserves more than a brief review. It moves on at least three levels: it is, first, a study of the Bray family—Billy and Nell, the parents, and James and Catherine their children; it is also a study of "history," a meditation, if you will, on what the word means not only to the Bray children but to all who want to recapture the "past" and discover that it never existed as implacable *fact*; it is, finally about the "mix" of art and reality, of "word" and "world." These three levels, in effect, do not move in any linear manner; thus any page of the novel combines the various levels and, indeed, makes them into a maze of meaning, an epistemological labyrinth.

If, for example, we simply read the story of Billy Bray, we discover that his life is dominated by one event—the *investigation* of the murder of a soldier by a woman who pleads self-defense. I underline investigation because we eventually learn that in the investigation, any exploration of motives is unclear. Bray, who works as a detective for the state government, offers one version of the murder. But this version is a perversion; it is *his story*; it does not account for the full complexity of the event.

And Bray's investigation is viewed in different ways. Catherine, a spinster at age fifty, recognizes that her childhood and adulthood have, in a mysterious way, been shaped by Bray's testimony. She lives alone because she cannot ever be sure about the motives of men, including those of her brother James. An actor (of limited ability), James has been influenced by his father; he has refused to accept "ordinary" happenings. He tries to rewrite—or, better yet—to *recreate* Billy in a movie he wants to sell to his agent.

The second level of the novel has as its setting more than the "private" Bridgeport or Bray family. It is a bold "double entry" into the way "history" is an odd, mysterious fiction. Perhaps the centerpiece of the novel is the section called "double entry." We are told that in "the beautiful concept of double-entry bookkeeping the debt and credit must agree; no inaccuracies or altered circumstances are admitted...." This section of the novel can be read in several ways; we can read the fascinating references to Bridgeport in the life of P.T. Barnum, Lincoln, and other famous historical figures. (Barnum is, perhaps, the secret hero of the novel because he was not only a citizen of Bridgeport but a genius who recognized the need to carry history into the unreality of life. Indeed, he saw history—whatever it is—as a kind of duplicity, a hoax, a stage show.) On the right-hand side of this section of double entry we can continue to read about the Brays. Howard is, in a sense, questioning the relation of private and public history, of those uncanny associations which can never be correctly explained. She writes: "Double entry, designed to place equivalencies...when something is missing...when something is lost, you simply set down a number on the other side of the page to compensate, reconcile...as if to balance, naturally...as if to insist that the beautiful system must hold."

The "beautiful system" in effect, leads us to the third level of the novel. What exactly is the relationship of language to life? Can words ever capture life? Is it possible to describe those longings which lie at the heart of "simple" Billy or James? It is interesting to note that Howard ends her "double entry"—now notice the dark pun!—with a series of speculations on vowels. She is aware that "a" or "e" or "o" are symbols; they exist because they began as "pictures": "In the beginning was the picture. It was the initial A, peak and crossbar simpler than drawing of horse upon the wall of cave."

The three levels *intersect* in our minds. We recognize that we can never understand "nature" or "history" in any completely rational way. We crosscut events and motives in an unconscious way. We manipulate them—or are manipulated by them?—so that our *constructions* are in continual flow, refusing finality.

Perhaps the invisible message of the entire novel is that humanity is flawed, that it can never know unearthly designs. □

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More holy people

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Of books about Merton there seems to be no end. Michael Mott's *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* (1984) is the most exhaustive biography but its encyclopedic narrative left little space for reflection and analysis. Subsequent biographical volumes by writers like Basil Pennington and James Forest were acts of *pietas* but not very satisfactory in terms of advancing our understanding of Merton. It is for that reason that I was much pleased by, and heartily recommend, William H. Shannon's book. He is without peer in his mastery of the vast amount of written Mertonia (he is general editor of the five volumes of letters), is a trained theologian, and a person of wide culture.

Silent Lamp: The Thomas Merton Story, *by William H. Shannon, Crossroad, $22.95, 304 pp.*

His book is a nice balance of biographical information and close reading of Merton's major texts. He goes a long way in answering a question often asked: Why does Merton endure and why the fascination with a writer now dead nearly a generation? Merton's only peer in this regard would be C. S. Lewis who is himself the center of a publishing industry. Shannon's answer is that Merton, despite his penchant to reach for a pen too hastily at times, lived and wrote out of a deeply centered life of religious experience. His life and writings, in short, rang true. Furthermore, he was able to move out from that deep center and contact a wide circle of people who differed from him in religion, temperament, language, and culture.

Shannon is excellent in showing how Merton grew and, in that growth, how he was able to live in a profoundly traditional monastic culture (the contours of which he himself would change) with an openness to the modern world which he, as a young person, knew and celebrated. Anyone who would like a first introduction to Thomas Merton would do well to read this book both for the broad biographical information Shannon provides in a series of chronologies which locate Merton's life in tandem with the events of the time, and for his sensitive reading of Merton's texts. This book is not a scholarly monograph (Shannon has also done one of those), but it is a good place to start as a prelude to reading such monographs on Merton. It would also serve as a guide for reading Merton since Shannon is quite good in singling out the more important essays from the hundreds Merton wrote.

Joseph F. Chorpenning's study of Teresa of Avila has a methodological framework. He is convinced that her four major works have a kind of frame that derives from her own passion (one shared by both the historical Ignatius of Loyola and the fictional Don Quixote) for medieval romances. Chorpenning borrows from the theoretical work of the late Northrop Frye to set that frame and then tests it by a reading of the major works in the Teresian corpus.

The Divine Romance: Teresa of Avila's Narrative Theology, *by Joseph F. Chorpenning, Loyola University Press, $15.95, 175 pp.*

The merit of this approach is to give a sense of narrative order to works that even the most sympathetic critics find sprawling and difficult. The danger, of course, is the temptation to construct a theoretical frame into which the texts get hammered no matter how awkwardly they might fit. I am happy to say that the author did not fall into the latter trap. In fact, what he has produced is a very fine, extremely readable, not overly long, introduction to the Teresian corpus. One could see this book as a kind of painless first introduction for someone who wished to do a careful study of Teresa's autobiography or *The Interior Castle*. I will place it right next to my volumes of Teresa's works, which is where it most appropriately fits.

Thomas R. Nevin's study of Simone Weil is the third large-scale work on the French writer/mystic which I have commented on in this column over the past few years. I found Gabriella Fiori's biography (1989) good on narrative but short on analysis and David McLellan's *Utopian Pessimist* (1990) first-rate for its intellectual grasp of Weil's writings. The fact that I now mention a third biographical work points out that Weil is the kind of person whose life (and thought) does not yield easily to a definitive work. Each biography—and Nevin's is no exception—also fights against other interpretations and against the temptation to dwell on the eccentric-

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *chairs the department of theology at the University of Notre Dame; his* Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master *(Paulist) was recently published.*

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ity of her life at the expense of other writings or vice versa.

How does Nevin stack up against these recent works? He has not written a straightforward biography; he gives us enough of the life to put the writings in context and his understanding of context is a broad one. I still prefer McLellan but I learned a great deal from reading Nevin. Nevin gives us the best account of how influential Alain, her philosophy teacher in Paris, was on her thinking and in the formation of her style, and, again, how she slowly evolved out of Alain's Cartesian rationalism. He is also good in showing how Weil read classical texts through the lens of her burning interest in the political world. He makes the brilliant suggestion—I think—that her well-known hatred for Rome and its empire may well be linked to her disgust at French colonialism.

Simone Weil: Portrait of a Self-Exiled Jew, *by Thomas R. Nevin, University of North Carolina Press, $32.50, 488 pp.*

Simone Weil had little love for the Old Testament and a distaste for Judaism, which was deep and visceral despite the fact that she was Jewish. Nevin, nonetheless, sees her under the rubric of the Jewish "Just Person" who did not talk about the oppressed and poor but gave of her money, her food, her energy, and, in the final analysis, her life. It was that passion for the experience of justice that drove her to factory work and to the civil conflict in Spain in the 1930s and to London with the Free French at the end of her life.

In creating his portrait of Weil, Nevin feels compelled to resist any claims Christians may make on her. He will not countenance Weil as a hidden believer or a Christian mystic. His vigor in reacting against those who read her life in this fashion leads him to a kind of supercilious way of dismissing Christianity which is irritating and unhelpful. There is in this book a kind of know-it-all tone that grated on me especially when his comments on religion were often more critical than learned. The Bhagavad Gita is described as an evangel of "knowledge as worship" (the whole point of the Gita is to love God; it preaches the yoga of *bhakti*—devotion); he kisses off a millennium of patristic biblical commentators as those who impose a Christian anagogy on "innocuous and resistant Jewish scriptures"; Christians are lambasted for telling Jews that forgiveness is "owed" to the Nazis. (Which Christians tell which Jews that?)

Asides like that run through the text with such regularity that I would put this book down in exasperation only to pick it up again because of the value of his analysis of a particular work (he is exceptionally good, for instance, on Weils's *The Need for Roots*). Readers interested in Weil will need to work through this book. I only hope they will not find it as nettlesome a chore as I did.

John Bowden's little book has an ambitious aim: to provide a dictionary of crucial figures in the history of Christian theology from the first century to the present. Bowden understands "theology" in the broadest of contexts as the work of anyone who has seriously thought about the Christian datum. This allows him to include a figure like Gerard Manley Hopkins who was not technically a theologian but who wrote "theologically," and Jacques Derrida whose connections to theology are indirect and—let me express a prejudice here—malign. Each person gets a modest paragraph or two with an encapsulated biography; a mention of important works; a synopsis of his/her views. The book ends with a list of popes that draws heavily on J. N. D. Kelly's admirable *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes.*

In his introduction Bowden admits that he probably missed much and invites readers to supply what is lacking. His choice of persons is so idiosyncratic that one hesitates to begin. If Georges Bernanos, why not Graham Greene? If Bernadette Soubirous, why not the Little Flower, Thérèse of Liseux? If Harvey Cox, why not Joseph Fitzmyer or Richard McCormick (to name two North Americans of great scholarly stature)? More strange is the omission of a string of authentic giants who set the stage for much of the spirit of Vatican II: De Lubac,

Who's Who in Theology, *by John Bowden, Crossroad, $18.95, 152 pp.*

Chenu, Daniélou, Guardini, and John Courtnay Murray. We also need to suggest Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. And also....But, let me stop. Half the fun of owning this little book would be listing favorite authors who are absent from it. P.S. Gertrude of Helfta and Flannery O'Connor and....

As late as the beginning of this century scholars considered the *vitae* of early Frankish female saints as fictions gussied up by Carolingian forgers who transformed pagan divinities into Christian saints. Scholars, preeminently the Bollandist, Hippolyte Delahaye, demolished that theory by showing that these stories were connected to places where a cult and a tradition could be traced back to Gallo-Roman times. Jo Ann McNamara and her collaborators have translated eighteen of

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these early lives and presented them to us in a book with a wonderful introduction and copious notes. This is an exemplary contribution to the ongoing recovery of the history of women in the Christian tradition. It will get, I suspect, wide use in university courses.

Sainted Women of the Dark Ages, *edited and translated by Jo Ann McNamara et al., Duke University Press, $17.95, 340 pp.*

The names of these women, with the exception of Genovefa (i.e., Genevieve) the patroness of Paris, would be little known to most people who are not scholars of the period. The fact that they are little known does not mean that they are devoid of interest. The editor's point, in a helpful survey, is that themes dear to later hagiography are less common in these sixth- and seventh-century accounts. Little time is spent on virginity (many were married and widowed) or on the pursuit of poverty. These women came from the aristocratic classes and found their vocation as nuns and abbesses of monasteries which were often under royal patronage.

Most of the *vitae* emphasized the power of the saint (that was a sign that she was a saint) during her lifetime. The biographers also liked to point out that their ascetical lives were a new form of martyrdom. This was a *topos* that goes all the way back to Athanasius's *Life of Anthony*: the ascetic life as a daily martyrdom. Beyond that, these women were seen as exemplars of the Christian life. Their way of living was a not-too-subtle contrast to the warrior virtues of their fathers, former husbands, brothers, and relatives.

At least two of these *vitae* were written by women who knew their subject at close hand. The others, despite some literary touching up in Carolingian times, speak clearly of a time when Christianity moved into Western Europe energized by these remarkable women who were part of its success. The seventh-century *vitae* reflect women who were more domesticated and controlled by the increasing power of the hierarchy but the sixth-century *vitae* reflect women who were clearly powerful in their own right and in their capacity to affect society directly. Their stories are interesting in themselves and, by extension, for the light they shed on the role of women in the church.

Robert Ellsberg's anthology of the writings of Dorothy Day is a reprint of a collection first published under the title *By Little and by Little* (Knopf, 1983). It is wonderful to have it back in print since so many of Day's works are out of print. Ellsberg has selected from her columns, essays (some first appeared in this magazine), and books (e.g., her estimable life of the Little Flower).

Dorothy Day: Selected Writings, *edited by Robert Ellsberg, Orbis, $15.95, 371 pp.*

The selections are just long enough to read as discrete pieces. I have kept this book on my desk and rewarded myself with a brief reading after completing the more mundane tasks that take up my day. Day, a journalist by training, had a direct and vivid prose style as her essays on her not-infrequent jailings attest. Best of all, of course, was her burning faith and her total commitment to the poor and the outcast. She was also a reader who had a fine eye for the aphorism and maxim. I found myself jotting some of them down and will share just enough of them with readers to prompt them to go back and read the work of this great American saint:

"It's expensive to be poor."

"We need to create a society where it is easy to be good" (quoting Peter Maurin).

"The land of propaganda is built on unanimity. If one person says 'No' the spell is broken..." (Ignazio Silone).

"Penances voluntarily undertaken are not as meritorious as those imposed on us by the circumstances of our lives and cheerfully borne" (Angela of Foligno).

"One could go to hell imitating the imperfections of the saints" (Mauriac). □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

People who object to female priests remind me of slave owners who let slave women nurse their children. The black woman's breast was good enough for nursing but the rest of her wasn't good enough for freedom. The institution of slavery had to be preserved. In the Catholic church, nuns were good enough for educating priests but not good enough to become priests. The institution must be preserved. (By the way, I'm not saying women can't get institutionalitis. When that happens, the people who bear the brunt of it have to find a solution or endure, as we're doing now.)

William Herr concludes his excellent little book *In Search of Christian Wisdom* by commenting on Socrates' aphorism, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Herr says: "If that was true for him, it must be even more true for those who, far from believing they have all the answers, have only one answer, Christ—and who believe that this is an answer which makes everything else uncertain. The true Christian must constantly re-examine, challenge, and inquire." That's not easy for anyone, least of all a senior institutionalist.

MARTIN YOUNG

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Over the past year, and particularly in the past several weeks, Commonweal Associates have played an ever more important role in enabling this magazine to keep publishing. Members' gifts received here through January 14 have bridged the gap between our operating income and the steadily rising expenses of publishing. Our warm welcome to the loyal readers who have come to the rescue by joining the Associates at the end of the year and in the first two weeks of January. The following list of members—some new, some faithfully renewing—demonstrates what a remarkable bulwark of sustenance and encouragement the Commonweal Associates have come to be. Our heartfelt thanks to one and all.

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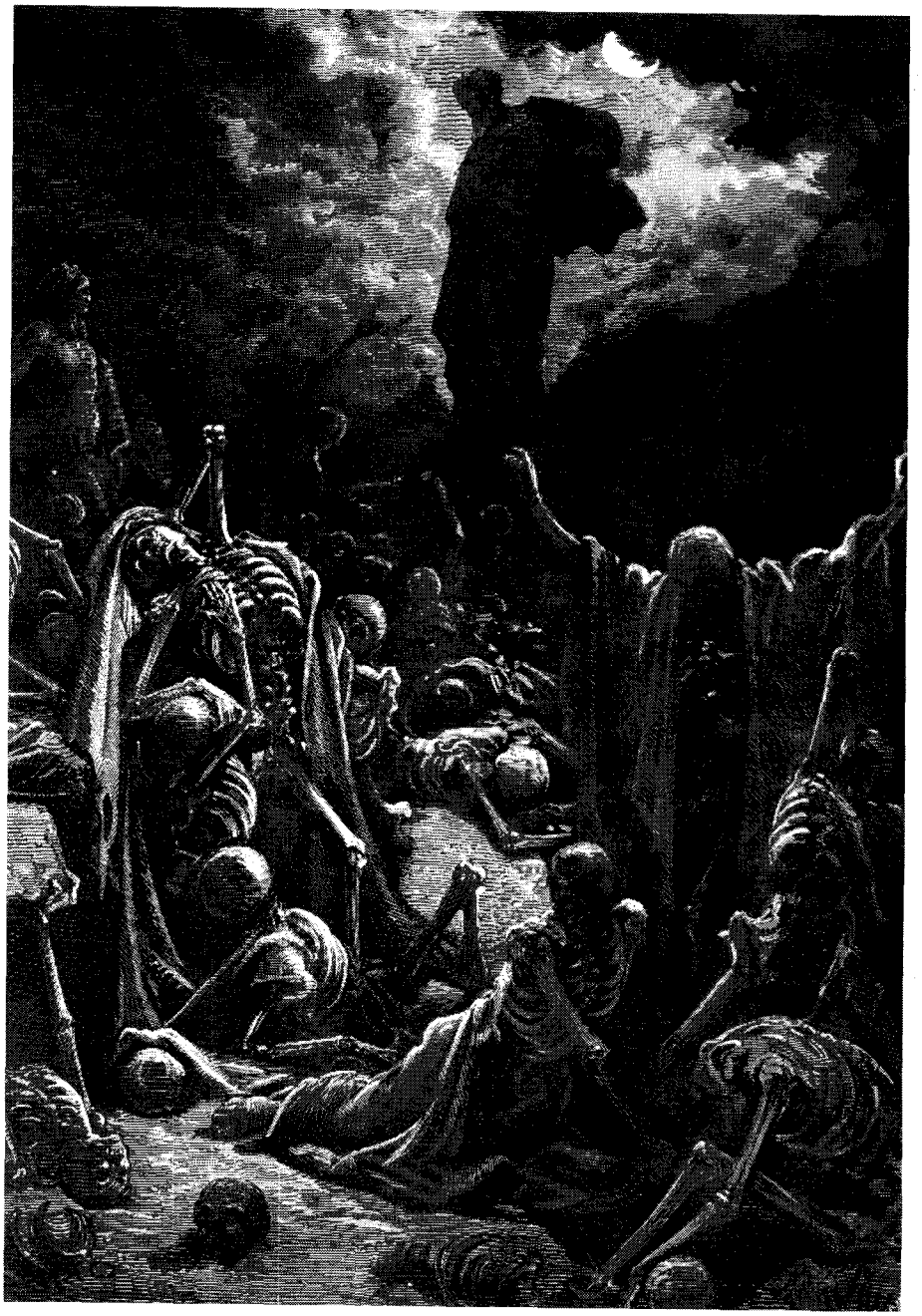

Current discussions about young Catholics suggest that Catholic leaders are less concerned with our welfare than with the well-being of the church generally. This is a natural consequence of the Second Vatican Council's revised understanding of the church, and its corresponding revision of the nature of salvation. If you see the church chiefly as the body of its people, and not chiefly as, say, a divine agency appointed by God to do his saving work on earth, your in-house evangelizing efforts will be less menacing but also somewhat less compelling.... Your sense that Catholicism isn't taking hold on the younger end leads you to think not of souls lost for eternity, but of the church losing its vigor in the here and now. Because you can't get all that worked up about young people going to hell, you mostly worry that if you fail to sponsor a Catholic identity in them, the religion you've known will go out of this corner of the world, and the kids will have missed out on something grand.

—Paul Elie,
"On Young Catholics & the Church"
Commonweal, September 27, 1991

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